U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

December 2025

Montana/Dakotas State Office
5001 Southgate Drive
Billings, Montana 59101

Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning

Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas

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https://www.blm.gov/programs/fish-and-wildlife/sage-grouse

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Lower Bar Photos (left to right):

US Fish and Wildlife, Rachel Woita, James Yule

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

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Montana/Dakotas Record of Decision
and
Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment
for Montana/Dakotas

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Cooperating Agencies

United States Forest Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Blaine County Commission
Bowman-Slope Conservation District
Fergus County Commission
McCone County Commissioners
Montana Department of Agriculture
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Montana Department of Livestock
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Montana Grass Conservation Commission
Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Program
North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Phillips County Commission
Prairie County Commissioners
Rosebud County Commissioners
Slope County Commissioners
Sweet Grass County Commissioners
Valley County Commission

Dear Reader Letter

In reply refer to:
1610 (MT-930)
Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning

Dear Reader:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is pleased to announce the issuance of the Montana/Dakotas Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment for the portion of the Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) Rangewide Planning effort in Montana/Dakotas. This document includes both the ROD and the Approved RMP Amendment for the planning area. The ROD and Approved RMP Amendment, as well as all associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents, are available online on the BLM's National NEPA Register at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2016719/510.

The Proposed RMP Amendment/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released on November 15, 2024, and was subject to a 30-day protest period that ended December 16, 2024. Resolution of protests is delegated to the BLM Assistant Director for Resources and Planning on behalf of the BLM Director. The BLM received 60 unique protest letters during the 30-day protest period. The resolutions of the protests are summarized in the BLM Director's Protest Resolution Report: Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning Proposed RMP Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement, which is available at: https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/public-participation/protest-resolution-reports

Thank you for your interest in the GRSG RMP Amendment. There are numerous values and concerns associated with the management of GRSG habitat across the West. We remain committed to implementing the policies and conservation measures that will meet the BLM's multiple-use and sustained yield mandate, provide for the habitat needs to conserve GRSG, avoid the need to list under the Endangered Species Act, and minimize long-term regulatory burdens. Your continued involvement in the management of public lands in Montana/Dakotas is invaluable in ensuring BLM management will sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of BLM-administered lands for present and future generations.

Sincerely,

Sonya I. Germann
State Director, Montana-Dakotas
Bureau of Land Management

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AML	Appropriate Management Level
APHIS	US Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
BFO	Butte Field Office
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CHMA	Connectivity Habitat Management Area
COA	condition of approval
COT	Conservation Objectives Team
CSU	controlled surface use
DDCT	Density Disturbance Calculation Tool
DPS	distinct population segment
EIS	environmental impact statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESD	ecological site description
FIAT	Fire and Invasives Assessment Tool
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
GHMA	General Habitat Management Area
GRSG	greater sage-grouse
HAF	Habitat Assessment Framework
HMA	Habitat Management Area
HPMF	Hierarchical Population Monitoring Framework
LHS	land health standard
LMHMA	Little Missouri Habitat Management Area
MW	megawatt
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
NSO	no surface occupancy
PHMA	Priority Habitat Management Area
RDF	required design feature
RMP	resource management plan
ROD	record of decision
ROW	right-of-way
SCHMA	South Carter Habitat Management Area
SFA	Sagebrush Focal Area
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
STM	state and transition model

TAWS	Targeted Annual Warning System
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
TL	timing limitation
UHMA	Unique Habitat Management Area
UMRBNM	Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
WAFWA	Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
WEM	Waiver, Exception, or Modification

Record of Decision

INTRODUCTION

This Montana/Dakotas Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment amends a subset of greater sage-grouse (GRSG) goals, objectives, allocations and management direction in nine Bureau of Land Management (BLM) RMPs in Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota.

West wide GRSG planning efforts completed in 2015 were initiated while plan revisions were ongoing for multiple plans in the Montana/Dakotas region. GRSG management was included in plan revisions for areas with planning efforts substantially in process, and as amendments for that were not. The 2015 effort resulted in updated GRSG management in seven plans, three as amendments and four as revisions. However, the Butte Field Office (BFO) and the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM) were not included due to minor amounts of habitat in the BFO and protections provided by inclusion of GRSG as an object and value of the monument proclamation in the UMRBNM. Subsequently, the Lewistown Field Office completed a plan revision in 2021 and North Dakota completed a plan revision in 2025 which brought forward most GRSG management from both 2015 plan amendments that were incorporated into the 2021 and 2025 plan revisions. Montana-Dakotas BLM offices were not part of the GRSG plan amendments completed in 2019. Therefore, to create consistency across BLM managed in Montana/Dakotas, this amendment applies to all nine planning areas with GRSG habitat. Following is a list of the plans that are amended by BLM district:

North Central District Office

- HiLine RMP 2015
- UMRBNM RMP 2008 (not part of 2015 Amendment process)
- Lewistown RMP 2021

Western District Office

- Dillon RMP 2006, including the 2015 GRSG Approved RMP Amendment
- Butte RMP 2009 (not part of 2015 Amendment process)

Eastern District Office

- North Dakota RMP 1988, as amended[1]
- Miles City RMP 2015
- South Dakota RMP 2015
- Billings RMP 2015

[1] On December 11, 2025, in accordance with the Congressional Review Act, 5 USC 801–08, the President signed a joint resolution into law disapproving the BLM's January 2025 North Dakota Resource Management Plan Revision. Pub. L. No 119-49. Therefore, the 1988 North Dakota Resource Management Plan, as amended, is now in effect for the North Dakota Planning Area.

On December 11, 2025, the President signed a similar joint resolution for disapproval under the Congressional Review Act for the BLM's Miles City Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (approved November 2024). Pub. L. No 119-48. Because the November 2024 Miles City Plan amendment related only to coal leasing, the December 11, 2025, joint resolution of disapproval does not affect any greater sage-grouse management decisions made in the 2015 Miles City RMP and reconsidered in this Greater Sage-Grouse Record of Decision and Amendment for the Montana/Dakotas.

Collectively these land use plans are referred to as the existing decisions.

This Approved RMP Amendment builds on the work that was completed in BLM's 2015 and 2019[2] GRSG RMP Amendments and responds to the loss of habitat and the declining population of GRSG, a ground-dwelling bird that multiple times has been petitioned for listing, leading to consideration by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In 2010, the USFWS determined that listing the GRSG under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) was "warranted but precluded" by other priorities. However, in 2015, new information about the status of the species, largely due to efforts surrounding regulatory mechanisms and conservation efforts, led the USFWS to determine the species was not warranted for listing. In the Montana-Dakotas portion of their range, GRSG are found in southwestern Montana and across eastern Montana from the Canadian to the Wyoming border, as well as in northwestern South Dakota, and southwestern North Dakota. In Montana, there are about 1,000 confirmed active GRSG leks. The Dakotas are on the far eastern edge of GRSG range and the two states' populations are considered at a higher risk of extirpation because of their small numbers and isolation. GRSG in the Dakotas form a population connected to areas in eastern Montana and northeast Wyoming, though it is unclear how many birds move between the states (Cross et al. 2016, Row et al. 2018, Oyler-McCance et al. 2022). Additional background on the prior GRSG planning processes can be found in the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in Chapter 1.2, GRSG Planning Background. The Approved RMP Amendment provides the BLM Montana/Dakotas with locally relevant management actions and allocations that achieve rangewide GRSG conservation goals consistent with the BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mission and in support of coordinated GRSG management efforts with federal, state, local, and Tribal partners.

The Montana/Dakotas Approved RMP Amendment changes language relating to certain goals, objectives, allocations and management direction for GRSG management in response to updated scientific information and changing land uses to provide effective rangewide conservation and consistency between plans within Montana/Dakotas. GRSG in Montana range across most of the state, whereas GRSG in North and South Dakota have limited distributions and small population sizes. These differences resulted in variable factors being considered for identifying Habitat Management Areas (HMAs). Factors include differences in the amount of the population in the General Habitat Management Area (GHMA), HMAs to address different seasonal movement strategies, and addressing cross-state populations. Some of these differences also require consideration of different management approaches at a local level (state-specific circumstances) in contrast to rangewide approaches. The Approved RMP Amendment identifies updated HMAs that allow for the application of habitat conservation in areas where it will be most beneficial and effective. Within these HMAs, updated rangewide management direction for the following resource topics will be applied: fluid, saleable, and non-energy leasable mineral development; major and minor right-of-way (ROW) development; utility scale solar and wind development; livestock grazing; wild horse and burros; predation; mitigation; disturbance cap; adaptive management; criteria based management for non-habitat; updated habitat

[2] BLM Montana/Dakotas did not amend RMPs in the BLM's 2019 GRSG RMP Amendments. Following a thorough scoping process, during which the BLM considered the need to amend existing approved management plans, the BLM determined that the 2015 GRSG RMP Amendments provided for appropriate management of GRSG in Montana/Dakotas *while* allowing for updates, clarifications and consistency between rangewide and statewide plans. All references throughout this document to the 2019 GRSG RMP Amendments pertain to GRSG management in other BLM states and are intended to provide context about BLM management across the range of the GRSG. The collection of plans being amended in Montana/Dakotas are referred to as the existing decisions.

objectives, an updated lek definition, and an updated monitoring framework. Additionally, Montana/Dakotas is also updating management direction to:

- Increase consistency between Montana/Dakotas and state level conservation approaches (i.e., Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, the South Dakota Greater Sage-Grouse Action Plan 2022-2026, and the Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Greater Sage-Grouse in North Dakota) to provide uniform implementation of management direction among BLM offices and partner natural resource entities.
- Address variation in HMAs and peripheral populations such as higher proportions of leks in GHMA relative to other states, restoration needs, mixed ownerships, current local land use practices and unique migratory behaviors.
- Implement lessons learned from 2015 plans.

Throughout this planning process, the BLM engaged with Tribes, cooperating agencies, and the public, as further described below. Montana/Dakotas' personnel held coordination meetings, provided key milestone updates, and facilitated administrative reviews with cooperating agencies, as well as provided opportunities for public engagement, information sharing and participation in tribal outreach efforts. This decision is based on review and substantive comments from federal, Tribal, state, and local governments and agencies; industry; conservation organizations; and the 20 cooperating agencies that participated in the planning process in Montana and the Dakotas. The BLM worked closely with cooperating agencies that engaged throughout the planning process to develop alternatives and guide the development of locally relevant GRSG management. The signing of this ROD represents the conclusion of this planning process.

This ROD approves the BLM's proposal to implement the management direction presented in the attached Approved RMP Amendment in the Montana/Dakotas decision area. This Approved RMP Amendment was described as the Proposed RMP Amendment in the Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS that was released on November 15, 2024, with adjustments and clarifications made during the Governor's Consistency Review process and to align with changes in regulation and policy, as described in the **Changes and Clarifications** section below.

DECISION AREA

The planning area is the geographic area within which the BLM will make decisions. A planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of ownership, but the BLM can only make decisions on public lands and federal mineral estate within the agency's jurisdiction. This rangewide amendment planning area includes all lands within the boundaries of BLM field offices that contain GRSG habitat, excluding the Bi-state distinct population segment (DPS) and the Columbia Basin DPS, which are addressed in other planning efforts. The planning area for this RMP Amendment includes portions of California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, as shown in **Appendix 1**, **Map 1**, Greater Sage-grouse RMP Amendment Planning Area. The planning area within Montana and the Dakotas is shown in **Appendix 1**, **Map 2**, Montana/Dakotas Planning Area.

The decision area includes the lands within the planning area for which the BLM has authority to make land use and management decisions, including areas where BLM administers subsurface minerals. In Montana/Dakotas, the decision area for this Approved RMP Amendment applies to BLM-administered GRSG HMAs as shown in **Appendix 1**, **Map 3**, Decision Area in Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas. The Montana/Dakotas' decision area includes approximately 11.4 million acres of lands administered by BLM located in 2 counties in North Dakota (Slope and Bowman; 2 counties in South Dakota (Butte and Harding);

and 33 counties located in Montana (Carbon, Stillwater, Petroleum, Golden Valley, Fergus, Blaine, Hill Chouteau, Meagher, Wheatland, Sweetgrass, Park, Gallatin, Madison, Deer Lodge, Beaverhead, Carter, Fallon, Dawson, Wibaux, Custer, Powder River, Bighorn, Rosebud, Prairie, Treasure, Garfield, Yellowstone, Musselshell, McCone, Roosevelt, Valley and Phillips).

DECISION

The decision is hereby made to approve the attached GRSG Approved RMP Amendment for Montana/Dakotas. This RMP Amendment was prepared under the regulations implementing the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1600). An environmental impact statement was prepared for this RMP Amendment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969[3] and the planning regulations 43 CFR 161031-(b). The BLM selected the RMP Amendment after careful consideration of input from cooperating agencies; consulting Tribes; the Governors of Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota; and the public.

The decisions contained in the RMP Amendment are expressed as goals, objectives, allocations, and management directions. The decisions identified in the RMP Amendment are final and effective when this ROD is signed. The decisions contained in the RMP Amendment recognize and are consistent with valid existing rights. Future BLM decisions, including those that authorize third-party actions, would also be consistent with valid existing rights and applicable law. The decisions in this Approved RMP Amendment are planning-level decisions. Additional steps will be taken to implement on-the-ground activities which may require additional design, environmental review, mitigation, and monitoring. The BLM will prepare appropriate documentation where necessary to comply with NEPA when making implementation-level decisions.

The Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS did not reconsider all GRSG management actions in the existing RMPs, consistent with BLM's planning criteria and purpose and need, detailed below. Management actions in the existing plans that are not amended will remain in place (refer to **Appendix 2**, Comparison of Prior Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Management Direction with Approved RMP Amendment).

PURPOSE AND NEED

The BLM's purpose is to amend certain goals, objectives, allocations, and management direction for GRSG management in its RMPs to respond to updated scientific information and changing land uses and provide for consistent and effective rangewide conservation based on biological information that is responsive to locally relevant habitat variability. Following an internal review of the effectiveness of 2015 and 2019 RMP Amendment decisions, including the degree to which those decisions sufficiently addressed threats to GRSG habitats and continued population declines, while balancing the BLM's ability to manage public lands for other uses, and as informed by updated scientific findings and feedback received from Tribal, federal, state, and local agencies and the public during the scoping period, the BLM proposes to amend the following RMP elements:

- Clarifying the existing GRSG RMP goal
- GRSG HMA alignments to incorporate new science and improve alignment along state boundaries along with the associated major land use allocations, including management for non-habitat within HMAs

[3] The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA are rescinded, effective April 11, 2025. The BLM has complied with applicable procedures/regulations, including DOI's procedures/regulations implementing NEPA at 43 CFR Part 46, to meet the agency's obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

- Adoption of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) definition of "lek" and "lek status"
- Mitigation
- GRSG habitat objectives
- Disturbance caps
- Fluid mineral development and leasing objectives
- Fluid mineral leasing waivers, exceptions, and modifications (WEMs)
- Wind and Solar energy development
- ROWs
- Minimizing threats from predation
- Livestock grazing
- Wild horse and burro management
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
- Adaptive Management

Some management concerns are localized to circumstances in individual States and the ecological diversity across the sagebrush ecosystem. As such, the purpose of this planning effort also includes amending specific RMP management actions associated with state-specific circumstances to facilitate GRSG habitat conservation efforts. Beyond the rangewide considerations detailed above, states considered additional targeted amendments to existing management direction. Each state determined the need to amend management actions independently and based on a review of updated scientific information, changing land uses, and locally relevant habitat variability. Management actions targeted for amendment in some states include saleable minerals, fire and fuels, vegetation and invasives, lands and realty actions, project screening, lek buffers, and interagency coordination. Inclusion of a management category for amendment in one state does not necessitate consideration of this category in other states or the consideration of the category rangewide. See Section 2.5 of the Final EIS, State-Specific Circumstances, for more information.

Section 102 of FLPMA, as amended, establishes a congressional policy objective that4 BLM manage public lands "in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values; that, where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use." BLM policy further directs the BLM to proactively initiate conservation measures and to minimize or avoid potential adverse effects to prevent decline of sensitive species. Specifically, the BLM's Wildlife and Fisheries Management Manual, M-6500, directs the BLM to "conserve rare, vulnerable, and representative habitats, plant communities, and ecosystems," with specific objectives to "develop and implement plans to ensure that the characteristics of rare, threatened, or representative habitat types are maintained," and to "collaborate with other agencies, the States, and private groups to ensure protection of the best representative habitats/ecosystem/plant communities for each area." The BLM's Special Status Species Management Manual, M-6840 (2008), states "the BLM shall designate Bureau sensitive species and implement

[4] This sentence has been updated to more accurately describe Section 102 of the FLPMA. The purpose and need presented in the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS read "Section 102 of the FLPMA, as amended, requires the BLM to manage public lands…".

measures to conserve these species and their habitats...to promote their conservation and reduce the likelihood and need for such species to be listed pursuant to the ESA." 5

The BLM is therefore considering amending RMPs to:

- Address continued GRSG habitat losses, which can contribute to GRSG population declines. While GRSG populations experience natural fluctuations, monitoring indicates the most recent nadirs (low point of population cycles) are lower than the prior nadirs in most states. The U.S. Geological Survey6 analyzed state-collected lek data and reported estimated rangewide population declines of nearly 80 percent from 1966-2021 and of 41 percent from 2002-2021. While some GRSG populations are stable to increasing, over 87 percent of areas throughout the range had declining populations since 2002. The quantity and quality of available habitat, as well as non-habitat factors such as disruptive activities and prolonged drought can affect the size and trend of GRSG populations. Analyses of satellite data show sagebrush availability across all land ownerships declined by approximately 3 percent (1.9 million acres) between 2012 and 2018. Nearly 60 percent of the sagebrush losses (approximately 1.1 million acres rangewide) occurred on BLM-administered lands. In the years 2016-2024, over 9.2 million acres7 in sage-grouse range were burned by wildfire. Wildfire results in the greatest amount of direct habitat loss compared to other threats. This loss of habitat limits GRSG populations to smaller areas from which to obtain the needed habitat characteristics of food and cover. Constraining populations into smaller habitat areas accentuates impacts from other threats, which can then affect population trends. The BLM's 2021 Greater Sage-Grouse Plan Implementation Rangewide Monitoring Report for 2015-20208 identified 42 population triggers that had been tripped through 2020. Identifying, if possible, and responding to causal factors where population triggers have been tripped is critical to manage habitat to support state population objectives. In addition, habitat triggers were tripped sixteen times, mostly the result of sagebrush loss due to wildfires. The Monitoring Report estimated habitat loss of less than one percent in GRSG Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA) rangewide due to anthropogenic disturbance, although losses due to wildfire were more extensive. The anthropogenic loss on BLM lands is less than what scientific literature has identified as the threshold where GRSG abandon leks (Kirol et al. 2020). Disturbance from infrastructure in GHMA and other state-specific HMA designations averaged approximately 1.58 percent. To help address the continued losses of and impacts to habitat, the

[5] The September 2024 revisions to Special Status Species Management Manual M-6840 were rescinded in December 2025. The associated quoted policy direction was therefore updated to reflect the language from the 2008 Manual. The intent of this statement, that it is BLM policy to minimize the need for listing under the ESA, has not changed.

[6] Coates, P.S., Prochazka, B.G., Aldridge, C.L., O'Donnell, M.S., Edmunds, D.R., Monroe, A.P., Hanser, S.E., Wiechman, L.A., and Chenaille, M.P., 2023, Rangewide population trend analysis for greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*)—Updated 1960–2022: U.S. Geological Survey Data Report 1175, 17 p., https://doi.org/10.3133/dr1175.

[7] Total acres across the range of GRSG, including the Bi-State and Columbia Basin populations that are not included in this planning effort. Acres include all burned areas within the sage-grouse range maps, not limited to the RMP identified habitat management areas or just areas of sagebrush and sagebrush associated habitats. Acres are also inclusive of all ownerships, not just BLM-administered lands.

[8] Herren, V., E. Kachergis, A. Titolo, K. Mayne, S. Glazer, K. Lambert, B. Newman, and B. Franey. 2021. Greater sage-grouse plan implementation: Rangewide monitoring report for 2015–2020. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Denver, CO.

BLM proactively conducted sagebrush vegetation treatments on over 5.8 million acres[9] from 2016-2024. These included conifer removal, installation of fuel breaks, invasive species removal, habitat restoration, riparian restoration, and habitat protection.

- Ensure HMAs and associated decisions incorporate recent relevant science to prioritize management where it will provide conservation benefit and durability when considering the effects of extreme weather conditions, such as drought. Since the 2015 and 2019 planning efforts, hundreds of peer-reviewed scientific publications on GRSG and management of their habitats have been published. Some of these new publications are consistent with science the BLM previously considered while others identify new information. Several provide new spatial information on important population and habitat parameters for GRSG. USGS also compiled and summarized peer-reviewed journal articles, data products, and formal technical reports related to GRSG since January 2015 (Teige et al. 2023). The BLM considered this new information and relevant science in developing and analyzing proposed management on BLM-administered lands.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS and the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS considered a range of alternatives designed to meet the purpose and need to respond to updated scientific information and changing land uses and provide for consistent and effective rangewide GRSG conservation based on biological information that is responsive to locally relevant habitat variability (refer to **Purpose and Need** above). The Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS analyzed six alternatives. The Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS analyzed those same alternatives along with a seventh alternative, the Proposed RMP Amendment, which was developed using elements from the other alternatives and in response to public and cooperating agency comments on the Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS.

The Proposed RMP Amendment alternative in the Final EIS was within the range of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS and did not represent new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns bearing on the proposed action or its impacts, could have been reasonably anticipated for consideration by the public, and was responsive to public and cooperating agency feedback received on the Draft RMP Amendment and Draft EIS. Therefore, the BLM determined that adding the Proposed RMP Amendment between the Draft EIS and Final EIS did not necessitate supplementation.

Following is a summary of the alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS. Section 2.3, Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS describes alternatives that were considered but not analyzed in detail.

Alternative 1 (Applicable Decisions from the 2015 Approved RMP Amendment)

For the rangewide planning effort Alternative 1 included the applicable decisions from the 2015 Approved RMP Amendments that are proposed for amendment under this planning effort. It does not include all the goals, objectives, and actions from the 2015 Approved RMP Amendments. Under Alternative 1, the BLM would re-adopt the applicable GRSG HMA boundaries, goals, objectives, and actions from the 2015 RODs/Approved RMP Amendments (as updated through plan maintenance). Due to the U.S. District Court of Idaho's preliminary injunction preventing implementation of the 2019 amendments (see explanation in Alternative 2 summary below) this alternative reflects how the BLM is currently managing GRSG habitat on

[9] Acres include areas of treatment funded by the BLM. While these are largely on BLM-administered lands, funding often is used on non-BLM-administered lands adjacent to treatments on BLM-administered lands. In addition, these acres may include double-counting different treatments on the same acres (e.g., conifer removal, followed by seeding counts as two different types of treatments that may occur on the same acres).

public lands. This includes designation of some areas of PHMA as Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) with a recommendation to withdraw them from mineral location and entry under the Mining Law of 1872. Additionally, each project resulting in disruption to or loss of GRSG habitat must be mitigated to provide a net conservation gain, which would require use of compensatory mitigation.

Montana/Dakotas specific items

For BLM Montana/Dakotas Alternative 1 also includes the 2015 Approved RMP Revisions (HiLine, Billings, South Dakota, Miles City), the 2021 Lewistown RMP Revision, the 2006 Butte Revision, 2008 UMRBNM RMP Revision and 2015 GRSG Amendment to the 1988 North Dakota RMP which has been incorporated into the 2025 North Dakota RMP Revision. Alternative 1 included some variations to certain goals and objectives; management of Restoration HMAs; disturbance caps calculations; adaptive management in North Dakota, and legacy management from plans not amended in 2015.

The Butte and UMRBNM plans were not amended in 2015 and therefore do not have delineated HMAs or include habitat objectives tied to the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF). The Butte and UMRBNM plans also have different goals and objectives related to GRSG, lack appendices detailing 2015 management and have varying fluid mineral leasing management.

The 2021 Lewistown RMP revision carried forward much of the 2015 amendment management for GRSG but varies from other plans across the range in allowable uses for fluid mineral management, saleable mineral management and mitigation strategies in GRSG habitat.

Alternative 2 – No Action (Applicable Decisions from the 2019 Approved RMP Amendment)

For the rangewide planning effort, Alternative 2 is the No-Action Alternative and included the applicable decisions from the 2019 GRSG RODs/Approved RMP Amendments efforts except in Montana/Dakotas, which did not amend their RMPs in 2019. This is the No Action because it reflects the management language currently in the BLM's approved land use plans. The U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho has issued a preliminarily injunction, preventing the BLM from implementing the 2019 RMP Amendments, but not vacating them or their RODs. Because the 2019 RODs/Approved RMP Amendments were not vacated, they are the existing approved management plans. Under this alternative the BLM would apply the management from the 2019 Approved RMP Amendments. SFAs would be removed from the BLM RMPs in all states except Oregon and Montana; these areas would still be managed with all the protections of PHMA but would no longer include a recommendation for withdrawal (including in the Oregon SFAs). For projects that result in disruption to or loss of GRSG habitat, projects would be managed to minimize or eliminate threats to GRSG, or to improve the condition of GRSG habitat across the planning area, only requiring compensatory mitigation if required by the State, federal law, or if volunteered by the proponent.

Montana/Dakotas specific items

For BLM Montana/Dakotas, Alternative 2 is the same as Alternative 1. As described above (refer to the **Introduction**), BLM Montana/Dakotas did not amend their RMPs in 2019. As such, Alternative 2 is the same as Alternative 1.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 provided the most protective measures to preserve GRSG and its habitat of the alternatives analyzed. Alternative 3 would update the HMA boundaries based on new information and science that has become available since the 2015 and 2019 planning efforts. All HMAs would be managed as PHMA. The BLM would close PHMA to new fluid mineral leasing, saleable minerals/mineral materials permits, and nonenergy

leasable minerals leasing (development associated with existing permits and leases would not be precluded). PHMA would be recommended for withdrawal from location and entry under the Mining Law of 1872 and unavailable for livestock grazing. PHMA would also be ROW exclusion areas. Where there are currently designated wild horse and burro herd management areas overlapping PHMA, the wild horse and burro herd management area would become a Herd Area that is not managed for wild horses and burros. Under Alternative 3, the BLM would designate 32 GRSG habitat ACECs.

Montana/Dakotas specific items

For BLM MT/Dakotas, Alternative 3 Included 726,050 acres of ACECs and included some variations from the rangewide decision to account for local variations in land use authorizations for surface disturbing and disruptive activities, populating HMA management for plans not included in the 2015 amendment (SSS objectives and management actions, vegetation, fire and fuels, and minerals management), and management of Connectivity Habitat Management Areas (CHMA).

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 would update the HMA boundaries and associated management based on new information and science that became available since the 2015 and 2019 efforts. While many of the allocations would be similar to Alternatives 1 and 2, the HMAs are updated to reflect new science. Management associated with some of the major minimization measures (e.g., disturbance cap and adaptive management) is adjusted to address cross-boundary coordination of shared populations, rangewide biological and managerial concerns based on monitoring, and experience gained from implementing management for GRSG since 2015. Alternative 4 allowed compensatory mitigation to be used under specific conditions. Additional compensatory mitigation may be required where habitat and/or population adaptive management thresholds have been met. Areas previously identified as SFAs are generally managed as PHMA. The primary difference between management of SFAs in the 2015 Plans and PHMAs in this planning effort is that PHMA would not include a recommendation for withdrawal or prioritization strategies for oil and gas leasing and grazing permit renewals. For projects resulting in disruption to or loss of GRSG habitat, they would be managed to at least achieve no net loss of GRSG habitat, which could include compensatory mitigation.

Montana/Dakotas specific items

For BLM Montana/Dakotas, Alternative 4 included some variations from the rangewide decisions to account for local variations through designating CHMA, management of Restoration RMAs, management in GHMA, land use authorizations for surface disturbing and disruptive activities, ROW management including utility scale solar and wind, and populating HMA management for plans not included in the 2015 amendment, specifically special status species objectives and management actions, vegetation, fire and fuels, and minerals management.

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 was identified as the preferred alternative in the Draft EIS. Alternative 5 considers other potential alignments of HMAs and associated management to try to balance GRSG conservation with public land uses. If state governments updated the GRSG management area boundaries in their specific state plans, the BLM is considering those boundaries on public lands in Alternative 5. HMAs are similar to but refined from Alternative 4 and restrictions would generally be similar to Alternative 4. Alternative 5 considered options with fewer restrictions on resource uses and provided more opportunities for considering compensatory mitigation to offset impacts on GRSG and its habitat than Alternative 4. Areas previously identified as SFAs are generally managed as PHMA. The primary difference between management of SFAs in the 2015 Plans and PHMAs in this planning effort is that PHMA would not include a recommendation for

withdrawal or prioritization strategies for oil and gas leasing and grazing permit renewals. For projects resulting in disruption to or loss of GRSG habitat, similar to Alternative 4, they would be managed to at least achieve no net loss of GRSG habitat, which could include compensatory mitigation, but there would be more flexibility to when and how compensatory mitigation would be conducted.

Montana/Dakotas specific items

For BLM Montana/Dakotas, Alternative 5 included some variations from the rangewide decisions, similar to Alternative 4, to account to account for local variations through designating CHMA, management of Restoration HMAs, management in GHMA, land use authorizations for surface disturbing and disruptive activities, the inclusion of state approaches in the disturbance cap, ROW management including utility scale solar and wind, and populating HMA management for plans not included in the 2015 amendment, specifically SSS objectives and management actions, vegetation, fire and fuels, and minerals management.

Alternative 6

Under Alternative 6, management for all HMAs and the resource topics being considered in the range of alternatives would be the same as described for Alternative 5 except that under Alternative 6, 32 ACECs are proposed for designation. The same ACECs proposed for designation under Alternative 3 would be considered but the management direction for these areas would be less restrictive compared to Alternative 3.

Montana/Dakotas specific items

For BLM Montana/Dakotas, Alternative 6 included 726,050 acres of ACECs and some variations from the rangewide management direction to account for local variations through designating CHMA, management in GHMA, land use authorizations for surface disturbing and disruptive activities, mitigations standards, the inclusion of state approaches in the disturbance cap, ROW management, including utility scale solar and wind, and populating HMA management for plans not included in the 2015 amendment, specifically SSS objectives and management actions, vegetation, fire and fuels, and minerals management.

Proposed RMP Amendment

The Final EIS Proposed RMP Amendment increased protections for GRSG and its habitat from the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5) identified in the Draft RMP Amendment/ EIS. In response to the feedback received and to improve alignment with Federal policies, the BLM felt it was necessary to increase protection for GRSG, particularly in PHMA, from those identified in BLM's preferred alternative, Alternative 5. In particular, the USFWS expressed concern that the conservation measures, i.e., regulatory mechanisms, identified in Alternative 5 in the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS did not provide sufficient GRSG habitat protections. In response to USFWS feedback on the Draft EIS, the BLM increased protective measures, particularly in PHMA, in accordance with BLM's Special Status Species Manual, M-6840, which directs the BLM to "emphasize proactive conservation for BLM sensitive species to help ensure these species do not need to be listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA." The Proposed RMP Amendment identified PHMA as exclusion for solar and wind and retained the No Surface Occupancy (NSO) for fluid minerals with exceptions. PHMA remained an avoidance area for major ROWs but the exceptions for allowing development are more restrictive. Since the Preferred Alternative in the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS, the BLM also increased protections in PHMA by adding additional detail on the processes and requirements for compensatory mitigation, site-scale assessments, adaptive management, and fluid minerals WEMs to promote rangewide consistency, ensure proper tracking, and clarifying the coordination that will occur with state wildlife agencies. Areas within PHMA for additional protections were also identified. Within these areas referred to as PHMA with limited exceptions, there were no exceptions to the solar and wind exclusion

allocation or for the NSO allocation for fluid minerals. PHMA with limited exceptions were also exclusion areas for major ROWs with exceptions. These additional protections in the Proposed RMP Amendment were designed to provide the necessary protections for GRSG and its habitat in light of anticipated development threats and negative impacts from extreme weather conditions such as drought.

Montana/Dakotas specific items

For BLM Montana/Dakotas, the Proposed RMP Amendment included some variations from the rangewide management direction to account for local variations through designating Unique Habitat Management Areas (UHMA), management in GHMA, land use authorizations for surface disturbing and disruptive activities, mitigations standards, the inclusion of state approaches in the disturbance cap, ROW avoidance criteria and populating HMA management for plans not included in the 2015 amendment, specifically SSS objectives and management actions, vegetation, fire and fuels, and minerals management.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

The Approved RMP Amendment provides management direction that best meets the BLM's purpose of addressing updated scientific information and changing land uses, including information and uses not considered or addressed in the BLM's 2015 and 2019 amendments, while providing for consistent and effective rangewide GRSG conservation that is responsive to locally relevant habitat variability. The Approved RMP Amendment also best meets the need to address GRSG habitat loss, and the BLM believes this management approach is better than previous management. While GRSG populations experience natural fluctuations, monitoring indicates the most recent nadirs (low point of population cycles) are lower than the prior nadirs in most states. The BLM manages approximately half of the remaining GRSG habitats and between 2015 and 2020 nearly 60 percent (1.1 million acres) of all sagebrush losses (approximately 1.9 million acres rangewide) occurred on BLM-administered lands as a result of wildfire. The Approved RMP Amendment addresses this issue and provides new management that allows for the conservation of GRSG habitat while balancing the BLM's ability to manage public lands for other uses in accordance with FLPMA. The Approved RMP Amendment responds to statute, regulations, and national policy, including Section 102 of FLPMA, BLM's Wildlife and Fisheries Management Manual, M-6500 and BLM's Special Status Species Management Manual, M-6840; state-specific habitat conditions, threats, current land-use practices and land ownership patterns in Montana/Dakotas; and state government GRSG policies and management priorities including management plans, conservation strategies, wildlife action plans, and applicable Executive Orders. Appendix 23 of the Final EIS contains a comprehensive list of pertinent state and local plans considered for consistency with state, local and tribal plans and actions. The Approved RMP Amendment reflects the high degree of collaboration and input received from the cooperating federal, state, and local governments; the feedback received from Tribal governments; and from the over 39,000 public comments received on the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS. The Approved RMP Amendment provides the necessary protection for GRSG habitat in light of anticipated development threats and negative impacts from extreme weather conditions, such as drought, while also ensuring an appropriate balance of public land uses. For all the reasons included in this decision, the BLM believes the management approach in the Approved RMPA is better than the previous management set forth in the 2015 and 2019 amendments that is being amended.

Following, in more detail, are the ways in which the key components of the Approved RMP Amendment incorporate updated science and changing land uses, reduce habitat loss on BLM-administered lands, and incorporate feedback from Tribal, federal, state, and local governments and the public in an effort to develop a plan that has durability across the GRSG range while responding to the specific habitat, development threats, and public land uses in the Montana/Dakotas planning area.

Habitat Management Areas

The Approved RMP Amendment will reduce habitat loss on BLM-administered lands by identifying updated HMAs where GRSG habitat conservation measures will be implemented in areas where it will provide the greatest conservation value for this species. These updated HMAs respond to updated monitoring and scientific data (e.g., Coates et al. 2021b; Cross et al. 2018; Cross et al. 2022; Doherty et al. 2016; Oyler-McCance et al. 2022; Row et al. 2018; Palmquist et al. 2021; Rigge et al. 2021) and reflect the input of the federal and state land management and wildlife management agencies across the ten-state planning area, including the appropriate state wildlife and habitat management agencies in Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota. Within these HMAs, updated management directions to conserve GRSG habitat will be applied to: utility scale solar and wind development; fluid, saleable, non-energy leasable mineral development; major and minor ROW development; livestock grazing; predation; mitigation; disturbance cap; adaptive management; criteria-based management for non-habitat; and updated habitat objectives and lek definitions. Additionally, Montana/Dakotas is also updating management direction for addressing variations in HMAs to account for peripheral and unique populations, certain goals and objectives, and HMA management for plans not included in the 2015 amendment (including additional management for vegetation fire and fuels, and SSS management).

The Approved RMP Amendment identifies two rangewide HMAs, PHMA [10] and GHMA. The Approved Plan also contains three Montana/Dakotas-specific UHMAs: CHMA, the Little Missouri Habitat Management Area (LMHMA) and South Carter Habitat Management Area (SCHMA) that respond to local habitat priorities. PHMAs have the highest value to maintaining sustainable GRSG populations and can include breeding, late brood-rearing, winter concentration areas, and migration or connectivity corridors. GHMAs are lands that are or have the potential to become occupied seasonal or year-round habitat outside of PHMA, managed to sustain GRSG populations.

In Montana, CHMAs are areas that provide regions of connectivity important to facilitate the movement of GRSG and maintain ecological processes, including between priority populations, adjacent states, and across international borders.

The LMHMA is identified core area by the states of Montana and North Dakota. This area contained high-quality GRSG habitat in Montana and encompasses the remaining GRSG habitat in North Dakota. However, a substantial portion of the area is a unitized oil and gas field (the Cedar Creek Anticline). Unique management is needed to maintain connectivity of sagebrush and GRSG habitat between Montana and North Dakota and focus restoration efforts.

The SCHMA is identified as part of a core area by the State of Montana. However, this area is primarily developed or existing bentonite claims. Unique management is needed to balance GRSG habitat and mineral development in the short term, while planning for longer-term reclamation.

To create HMAs for this current planning effort the BLM built off prior efforts and further engaged cooperating agencies and stakeholders in the process. The PHMA, GHMA, CHMA, LMHMA and SCHMA reflect updates from the 2015 HMA delineation process and combined local knowledge, experience since

[10] As described in the **Changes and Clarifications** section below, in the Proposed RMP Amendment, the BLM identified areas within PHMA that would receive increased protections to support conservation of GRSG habitat by reducing impacts from highly probable resource threats, referred to as PHMA with limited exceptions. This distinct management approach is not included in the Approved RMP Amendment; these areas are all identified solely as PHMA.

the 2015 plans, and updated state information to compliment and provide context to new range wide and management zone habitat modeling efforts. The new GRSG science was used to identify areas to consider emphasizing based on management zone or rangewide importance, and to refine the type, quality, and location of habitat areas. Throughout the process the BLM sought consistency, as appropriate and supported, with state natural resource entity core and general (also connectivity in MT) habitat areas. BLM considered areas that should be added (or omitted) that provide (or do not) habitat for GRSG; and also considered, what changes to HMA types should be made across Montana-Dakotas. Additional information from the public comment period on the Draft EIS and continued coordination led to minor changes in HMAs from the preferred alternative (Alternative 5) presented in the Draft EIS and the Proposed Plan HMAs. Overall, changes between the Draft EIS and the Proposed RMP Amendment were made to avoid confusion and allow for specific objectives and management to address unique (e.g., peripheral) habitat. HMAs are delineated as approximate boundaries and representations of habitat, utilize models and coarse grain data, and don't account for the dynamic nature of GRSG populations. Therefore, habitat characteristics should be verified with local data and efforts and there may be areas of non-habitat contained within HMAs.

The identified HMA boundaries reflect updated habitat information that are based on monitoring data and updated scientific literature and the input and collaboration on the identification of boundaries with the States of Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota (refer to **Appendix 1**, **Map 4**).

In Montana/Dakotas, there are 5,088,000 acres of PHMA, 5,617,000 acres of GHMA, 376,000 acres of CHMA, 194,000 acres of LMHMA and 66,000 acres of SCHMA. Acreages include surface and split estate administered lands. These HMAs form the cornerstone of focusing BLM's GRSG conservation efforts in the areas where they will be the most beneficial and effective.

Allocations and Management Direction

In identifying the management allocations and direction that would apply in the PHMA, GHMA, CHMA, LMHMA and SCHMA to meet the purpose and need, the BLM considered the effects of the alternatives identified in the EIS (Chapter 4) and the feedback received from the public, cooperating agencies, and Tribal governments. The allocations in the Approved RMP Amendment will continue to reduce the potential for habitat loss by avoiding surface disturbance in the highest priority areas. Management considerations, in addition to the allocations, provide the opportunity for local managers, in coordination with the applicable state authorities with expertise, to consider local habitat conditions when evaluating project proposals. Beyond these opportunities to consider local habitat conditions, the BLM's Approved RMP Amendment increases protections in PHMA allocations and management direction from the Preferred Alternative identified in the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS by:

- changing the utility scale solar and wind allocations from avoidance to exclusion with specific exception criteria for potential ancillary solar development;
- expanding the definition of major ROWs to include other types of large-scale ROWs beyond transmission lines and distribution pipelines; modifying the allocation within 0.6 miles of active leks and crucial winter range and in existing ROWs; and modifying the rest of PHMA with narrowed exception criteria;
- before granting exceptions to the disturbance cap, the exception must receive BLM State Director concurrence, exceptions must be tracked, and conditions for mitigation must be met;
- updating habitat objectives to require the identification of multiple lines of evidence to determine overall habitat suitability when completing site-scale assessments;

- explicitly defining habitat inputs for adaptive management direction and clarifying the coordination that will occur with state wildlife agencies; and
- clarifying the fluid minerals WEMs management direction to promote rangewide consistency and ensure proper tracking of WEMs.

The Approved RMP Amendment for Montana/Dakotas is based on the Proposed RMP Amendment in the Final EIS (with changes and clarifications as noted in the **Changes and Clarifications** section), which incorporates management direction approaches from all the alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS. The allocations and management direction are designed to minimize surface disturbance while addressing habitat needs and development threats and public land uses in Montana/Dakotas thereby promoting conservation of habitat in a manner that allows for public land use where possible and appropriate in accordance with BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mission. Chapter 4 of the Final EIS details the potential impacts of these types of actions on GRSG and their habitat, both for the Proposed RMP Amendment and the other alternatives from which the Approved RMP Amendment was developed.

Following is a description of the management allocations and direction that achieve these objectives.

Habitat Management

The Approved RMP Amendment clarifies habitat management objectives and makes them consistent across the GRSG range and provides associated management direction that guides a consistent approach to promote the long-term durability of BLM's conservation efforts on federal lands. The updated objectives identify what constitutes suitable habitat and addresses seasonal habitats, dispersal, and migration and the need to limit habitat disturbance and fragmentation. The updated objectives identify the scale at which the different habitat components must be considered. Compared to the 2015 habitat objectives, the updated objectives acknowledge that habitat characteristics vary based on spatial scale, and that the conditions that characterize suitable habitat at the site scale vary based on ecological conditions throughout the range. Management direction provides methods for assessing habitat suitability using the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) assessments. However, specific vegetation conditions that characterize suitable habitat are moved from the objective itself and are instead summarized from the best available and locally applicable literature in the Habitat Indicator Tables. Because of this, the Appendix 4 Habitat Indicators Table was updated for this effort and will be periodically reviewed to incorporate the best available science in coordination with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal agencies. Additionally, the values provided in the Appendix 4 Habitat Indicators Table, as updated, will be used for HAF assessments. Updated management direction for habitat objectives also requires the identification of multiple lines of evidence to determine overall habitat suitability when completing site-scale assessments. These objectives and management direction respond to updated science and feedback received from cooperating agencies, including the USFWS, and appropriate state wildlife and habitat management authorities in Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota in addition to BLM's implementation experience.

Solar, Wind, Fluid Mineral, and Major ROWs

Rangewide PHMA are exclusion areas for solar and wind energy and there is an NSO allocation for fluid minerals. However, there are exceptions for solar energy generation that are ancillary to other approved uses (e.g., mineral development, data centers), and exceptions for fluid mineral development if specified criteria can be met.

PHMA is primarily an avoidance area for major ROWs with criteria for allowing development. In Montana/Dakotas, surface disturbing or disruptive activities will be excluded within 0.6 miles of leks in

PHMA, LMHMA and SCHMA. The remaining portions of PMHA, LMHMA, and SCHMA are avoidance areas. GHMA and CHMA are an avoidance area within 1.2 miles of active leks and in crucial winter range. GHMA and CMHA are Open, subject to GRSG objectives outside these areas and in corridors. **Table 2** and **Table 3** in the Approved RMP Amendment provide the avoidance criteria for major and minor ROW types within HMAs.

Fluid minerals will be NSO in PHMA, LMHMA (North Dakota portion only) and the SCHMA. NSO will also apply within 0.6 miles of leks and in crucial winter range in GHMA; no waivers, exceptions or modifications will be granted within 0.6 miles of leks in PHMA, LMHMA and SCHMA. Controlled Surface Use (CSU) stipulations for disturbance caps will apply in PHMA and the North Dakota portion of LMHMA. There will also be a CSU stipulation applied to GHMA, the Montana portion of the LMHMA, and CHMA. Timing limitations will be applied to all HMA types. See **Appendix 6** for a description of all waivers, exceptions and modifications. The Approved RMP Amendment adopts consistent WEMs derived from rangewide and state-specific management direction for all fluid mineral allocations.

Allocations for solar, wind and ROWs respond to concerns raised regarding the threats associated with surface use while also ensuring that where possible and appropriate these uses can be allowed. State-specific circumstances for solar, wind and ROWs further address measures to increase consistency between nine field office RMPs for GRSG management, incorporate unique circumstances of peripheral populations and account for the higher proportion of GRSG leks found in GHMA in Montana, and apply lessons learned from implementation of the 2015 plans. Adoption of consistent stipulation and WEM language provides clarity and a more efficient approach to GRSG management during fluid mineral exploration and surface development across BLM field offices. The selected management best incorporates feedback received from cooperating agencies, public comments, and states to improve coordination and consistency with state and local policies and plans.

In addition to the changes in fluid mineral allocations and WEMs, the over-arching fluid mineral objective no longer requires prioritization outside of PHMA and GHMA. Appendix C in the BLM's planning handbook (BLM-1601-1) identifies land use planning decisions for fluid minerals. A land use plan is to identify, "consistent with the goals and objectives for natural resources," areas that are 1) open to leasing subject to the terms and conditions of the standard lease form; 2) open to leasing subject to moderate constraints such as seasonal and controlled use restrictions; 3) open to leasing subject to major constraints such as no-surface-occupancy (NSO); 4) closed to leasing. The handbook also notes, similar to language from the Energy Policy Act of 2005, that "when applying leasing restrictions, the least restrictive constraint to meet the resource protection objective should be used" (BLM-1601-1 Appendix C page 24). The combination of open to leasing subject to NSO stipulation and the prioritization objective created a situation that has been confusing to the public over whether PHMA is open to leasing or not, and with what stipulations. Additionally, the planning handbook describes how an implementation strategy—not the RMP itself—is the appropriate tool for the BLM to prioritize RMP decisions to help achieve desired outcomes, taking into account the availability of existing or anticipated staff and budget resources. Therefore removing the prioritization process from the RMP aligns with current BLM planning guidance. This approach is also consistent with recent amendments to the Mineral Leasing Act through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21, Sec. 50101) ("OBBBA"), which limit the BLM's discretion for leasing parcels nominated in expressions of interest. Section 50101(d) of the OBBBA directs the BLM, acting on behalf of the Secretary, to make parcels known or believed to contain oil or gas deposits available for leasing "not later than 18 months" after receipt of an expression of interest, provided that the BLM "determines that the parcel of land is open to oil and gas leasing under the approved resource management plan applicable to the planning

area in which the parcel of land is located that is in effect on the date on which the expression of interest was submitted." Retaining the prioritization process following enactment of section 50101(d) would potentially confuse the public and, for parcels nominated in expressions of interest, would likely be inconsistent or in tension with this new statutory direction. Finally, the analysis in the FEIS shows that prioritization is unnecessary for the BLM to provide sufficient protection for greater sage-grouse. The prioritization process provides no certain or durable protection to PHMA, and the BLM is retaining the stipulations associated with surface occupancy and disturbance cap.

Moreover, not including specific leasing prioritization language or a specific leasing strategy in the RMP does not remove the RMP's desired condition to manage public lands for suitable GRSG habitat at the HAF mid-, fine- and site-scales. Fluid mineral leasing would be considered in GRSG habitat management areas consistent with the Secretary's discretion to consider leasing or not leasing available public lands under the Mineral Leasing Act (as amended), subject to the limits on that discretion resulting from the amendments to the Mineral Leasing Act through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. If lands are considered for lease, the action and any subsequent development would comply with applicable BLM regulations and policies, and conform to the RMP GRSG goals, objectives, stipulations, and management actions.

Locatable, Nonenergy Leasable, Saleable Minerals and Materials, and Coal

All HMAs are open to locatable mineral development in accordance with the 1872 Mining Law unless already withdrawn. Within PHMA, no new nonenergy leasable mineral development is allowed but the expansion of existing operations is allowed. In Montana/Dakotas, non-energy leasables are also closed to new applications in LMHMA and SCHMA, but the expansion of existing operations is allowed. GHMA and CHMA are open to nonenergy leasable mineral development with the application of state-specific minimization measures. In Montana/Dakotas, PHMA is closed to new large-scale mineral material sales but open to consideration of small-scale (e.g., less than 20 cubic yards), free use permits, and expansion of existing pits. GHMA is open for saleable mineral development with the application of state-specific minimization measures. For coal, in all HMA types in Montana/Dakotas, BLM will conduct the regulatory-required suitability process to determine if the lease application is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods and will coordinate with the state in making the determination.

The mineral materials management direction responds to state-specific circumstances through allowing both free-use and the sale of small amounts of mineral materials in certain locations to respond to community needs when possible and appropriate. The updated minerals allocations and management ensure the threats associated with these uses are avoided and/or minimized and are based on input received from cooperating agencies and the public. The direction will reduce habitat loss or disturbance in PHMA, SCHMA, and LMHMA while allowing use with the application of appropriate minimization measures in GHMA and CHMA thereby balancing necessary GRSG protections with public land use.

Livestock Grazing

The Approved RMP Amendment provides management direction for livestock grazing to promote GRSG habitat conservation when applying existing, BLM policies and approaches for livestock grazing. Specifically, the livestock grazing direction provides an objective to manage livestock grazing in a manner that meets or makes progress toward meeting the Land Health Standards related to habitat and applies guidelines that address restoring or enhancing GRSG habitat. For example, the use of targeted grazing to manage fuel loads and fuel continuity is an example of using livestock to protect valuable habitat. The management direction in the Approved RMP Amendment calls for considering GRSG when developing allotment management plans and other similar implementation planning that is done to meet or make progress toward BLM's Land Health

Standards. This includes considering the vegetation needs of GRSG and ways of implementing range improvements in a manner that is least impactful to GRSG. In PHMA, when fully processing grazing authorizations where livestock grazing is found to be a significant causal factor in not meeting the special status species standard (due to GRSG habitat findings), the NEPA analysis will include an alternative that identifies specific thresholds and responses to maintain or move PHMA toward providing suitable GRSG habitat. The Approved RMP Amendment also provides a suite of GRSG specific design features and best management practices for consideration and use when conducting livestock grazing in **Appendix 5**, Livestock Grazing Management Best Management Practices and Design Features.

The livestock grazing management direction was identified in response to cooperating agency and public feedback, updated scientific and monitoring data, and builds on and clarifies how the existing management direction for livestock grazing will continue to be implemented in a manner that conserves GRSG habitat.

Wild Horse and Burro Management

The Approved RMP Amendment provides management direction on wild horse and burro management to provide additional, specific direction regarding how to promote GRSG habitat conservation when applying the existing BLM policies and approaches for wild horse and burro management. Specifically, the management direction for wild horse and burros seeks to address areas within GRSG habitat where horses are a significant causal factor in not meeting Land Health Standards. Scientific literature has found that managing wild horses and burros at or below appropriate management levels minimizes negative impacts on GRSG population trends (Coates et al. 2021a, Beck et al. 2024). Where GRSG habitat overlaps with wild horse and burro habitat, the Approved RMP Amendment calls for managing wild horse and burro populations within established appropriate management levels and to achieve or make significant progress toward achieving Land Health Standards. The management direction directs the prioritization of wild horse gathers in PHMA unless removals are necessary in other areas to address higher priority issues, including herd health impacts.

The wild horse and burro direction was identified in response to cooperating agency and public feedback, updated scientific and monitoring data, and builds on and clarifies how the existing management direction for wild horse and burros will be implemented in manner that conserves GRSG habitat.

Mitigation, Disturbance Cap, Predation, Adaptive Management

As part of the comprehensive approach to promoting GRSG conservation, the Approved RMP Amendment updates the BLM's GRSG mitigation, disturbance cap, and adaptive management processes. These updates are responsive to public and cooperating agency feedback, changes in BLM policies, and experience the BLM has gained implementing these programs. For example, the BLM has learned that mitigation is most effective when it can be applied where the habitat and population impacts are occurring and has found the results of calculating the disturbance cap at the HAF fine-scale to be the most useful scale of analysis. For these same reasons, the Approved RMP Amendment also creates new management direction that addresses the predation risks associated with disturbance activities in GRSG habitat.

The mitigation direction in the Approved RMP Amendment aligns with the state GRSG plan and policies, requiring that the first two steps of the mitigation framework (avoid, minimize) be emphasized prior to requiring habitat compensation for residual impacts when implementing projects in GRSG habitat. In addition, the Approved RMP Amendment returns to the mitigation standard from the Draft EIS preferred alternative (no net loss), rather than the net conservation gain standard from the Final EIS Proposed RMP Amendment. This return to the Draft EIS preferred alternative is to emphasize working closely with states

to maintain existing habitat as well as aligning with state plans and authorities regarding compensatory mitigation. Where impacts remain following application of available avoidance and minimization measures, project proponents must ensure compensatory mitigation sufficient to have no net loss of GRSG habitat. The Approved RMP Amendment retains the entire breadth of mitigation tools to be implemented through conformance with the RMP, applicable statutes, and consistent with state plans and policies. Prior to granting an exception to the disturbance cap, the criteria noted in the RMP related to compensatory mitigation would need to be documented, The updated direction also provides necessary clarifications relative to compensatory mitigation such as the need to benefit the affected populations and is responsive to cooperating agency feedback, BLM's experience implementing mitigation, and updated policies and science (e.g., Coates et al. 2021b). Adopting this mitigation strategy more closely aligns the BLM with FLPMA requirements for consistency with state plans, and reflects the primary mitigation approach of avoiding and minimizing impacts through application of RMP allocations.

In Montana/Dakotas projects will require a no net loss standard. In addition, to allow for geographic variability and addressing local needs, mitigation strategies can be written for specific areas to provide more specificity about standards, locations, approaches and other mitigation requirements. The Montana/Dakotas approach continues the successful approach with state partners (e.g., Montana GRSG Habitat Conservation Program) while allowing for future flexibility to adapt to specific situations.

Recognizing the significant threat to GRSG that occurs from habitat disturbance, the Approved RMP Amendment updates the disturbance cap direction and sets a 3% cap at the project scale and 3% at the HAF fine-scale. In Montana/Dakotas an additional 5% cap that includes disturbances such as fire and agriculture will be applied at the project scale to match the state disturbance process. Disturbance caps will use the existing state approaches and maintain the current partnership and collaborative management approach for analysis. When these disturbance caps are met, new infrastructure projects would be deferred to the extent allowable under applicable laws or valid existing rights. This means that the BLM would not apply the disturbance cap in a manner that would interfere with any valid existing rights. The Approved RMP Amendment directs how the disturbance cap calculation will be done and identifies disturbance cap exceptions and related criteria.

If during ongoing BLM and state wildlife agency monitoring it is found that unanticipated effects to GRSG are occurring, despite the ongoing implementation of GRSG RMP amendment direction from 2015, 2019, and this Approved RMP Amendment, this amendment provides a method for BLM to address those impacts before they become severe or irreversible through adaptive management. The BLM closely coordinated with the Western Governors Association Sage-grouse Conservation Task Force (Task Force) to better align the BLM's adaptive management process with state policies and programs to manage GRSG populations. States expressed a need to clarify how state adaptive management approaches would be incorporated into the BLM's adaptive management process. The BLM worked closely with the Task Force to develop an adaptive management approach that recognizes state governments' authority to manage GRSG populations The adaptive management direction provides for using the best available science, including updated science examining population trend anomalies (Coates et al. 2021b) and was developed with significant feedback from cooperating agencies, including the appropriate Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota state authorities. The adaptive management direction identifies thresholds and responses and a process for coordinating with the Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota wildlife agencies and other appropriate state authorities to reduce and reverse impacts to GRSG and GRSG habitat. BLM is retaining the threshold limits for habitat loss or modification as in previous plans, although at a scale that is more meaningful to local populations.

The Approved RMP Amendment also addresses the secondary impact to GRSG from predation when habitat disturbance occurs (e.g., USFWS 2023). The management direction for predation responds to public and cooperating agency feedback that the BLM needed to address this topic as part of this amendment effort. The Approved RMP Amendment requires the application of minimization measures to new and existing projects to minimize threats from predators that pose a threat to GRSG consistent with applicable law. In PHMA, in new, expanded, or renewal of existing energy or transmission related energy, mining and infrastructure projects, the project proponent is required to submit a predator subsidy management plan to minimize habitat loss and associated influx and support of new predators as a result of the new project. The predator direction will help the BLM ensure that where projects have the potential to negatively impact GRSG, that appropriate design features and mitigation measures are put in place. The BLM does not have authority over predator control, however the BLM will continue to cooperate with other agencies should direct predator control be necessary.

The Approved RMP Amendment strategies for mitigation, disturbance cap, predation, and adaptive management provides BLM with a comprehensive suite of tools to ensure that GRSG conservation measures are effective, and BLM is able to be responsive to anticipated threats and unanticipated impacts. Furthermore, during implementation, BLM will continue to work in close coordination with state authorities and interagency teams to utilize best available science to collaborate on these, and other applicable, strategies. As needed, more in-depth guidance or agreements will be established (e.g., MOUs) to cover implementation details, roles and responsibilities, and to develop consistent management approaches.

Vegetation, Fire/Fuels and Plan-Specific Direction:

The approved RMP Amendment for Montana/Dakotas addresses direction for Vegetation, Fire and Fuels, Sensitive Status Species Management, and additional Minerals Management. Primarily this is language in the existing plans, however, management direction may contain some edits or additions as necessary to ensure consistent interpretation and management across Montana/Dakotas. The Butte and UMRBNM plans were not amended in 2015, and therefore this Approved RMP Amendment provides HMA management to ensure consistency across all resource programs in HMAs (e.g., SSS objectives and management actions, vegetation, fire and fuels, and minerals management).

The Dillon FO was included in the combined 2015 Idaho-SW Montana GRSG amendment. However, that amendment included management unique to Idaho, but not applicable in Montana including Wild Horse and Burro management, use of the Fire and Invasives Assessment Tool (FIAT), and incorporation of Key Habitat references. Management Directions (MDs) including SSS MD 5,6,37; VEG Objective 2, VEG MD 2,8 and 9; and MD FIRE 3,5, 7, 9-13, 20, 21,32 and 33 were removed or modified to clarify the FIAT does not apply to SW Montana. MDs for Key Habitat References including SSS MD 8, 9, 13, 16-18, 29, 30, 41, and 42 are removed to eliminate key habitat management actions for Dillon. While Wild Horse and Burro management was included in the 2015 Idaho-SW Montana planning area, the management actions are not applicable in for the Dillon Field Office in Montana. Therefore, the Approved RMP Amendment removes the 2015 Wild Horse and Burro language from the Dillon RMP and does not add in the rangewide Wild Horse and Burro Section.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

In Montana/Dakotas, the BLM considered two areas for potential designation as ACECs for GRSG habitat. These areas were first identified through both external nominations and internal rangewide and state-specific review processes that were subsequently thoroughly evaluated by BLM experts to determine if they met the ACEC relevance and importance criteria identified in 43 CFR 1610.7-2 (3)(i) and (ii) as in effect during

development of the Final EIS. Refer to Appendix 5, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern for Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat, in the Final EIS for information on the nomination and evaluation process. With input from cooperating agencies and the public, BLM identified the following two areas as meeting the relevance and importance criteria and included them, in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.7-2 (g) under Alternative 3 and Alternative 6 in the Final EIS as potential ACECs:

ACEC Considered	Acres
South Valley Philips	615,888 acres
Carter Crook	110,162 acres
Total	**726,050 acres**

In order to be designated as an ACEC, in addition to meeting the relevance and importance criteria, an area must also meet the special management attention criterion which is identified in 43 CFR 1610.7-2:

> ***(3) Special management attention.*** *The important historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish or wildlife resources; natural systems or processes; or natural hazards potentially impacting life and safety require special management attention. "Special management attention" means management prescriptions that:*
>
> > ***(i)*** *Protect and prevent irreparable damage to the relevant and important values, or that protect life and safety from natural hazards; and*
> >
> > ***(ii)*** *Would not be prescribed if the relevant and important values were not present. In this context, "irreparable damage" means harm to a value, resource, system, or process that substantially diminishes the relevance or importance of that value, resource, system, or process in such a way that recovery of the value, resource, system, or process to the extent necessary to restore its prior relevance or importance is impossible.*

In the Final EIS for this RMP Amendment, in compliance with 43 CFR 1610.7-2, the BLM evaluated the areas found to have relevance and importance and proposed them for ACEC designation in Alternatives 3 and 6. The BLM also analyzed the effects of the management direction to these potential ACEC areas under all of the alternatives, including the Proposed RMP Amendment which is identified in this decision, with changes and clarifications (refer to **Changes and Clarification** section) as the Approved RMP Amendment. Refer to Appendix 5 in the Final EIS for the analysis of effects. The effects analysis provides the information needed to determine if special management attention is needed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to the relevant and important values identified for the areas as required by 43 CFR 1610.7-2(3).

To determine whether special management attention through ACEC designation is appropriate for these areas, the BLM considered a range of management direction that included two alternatives (Alternatives 3 and 6) that would designate the areas as ACECs and establish associated management direction, and five alternatives (Alternatives 1, 2, 4, 5, and the Proposed RMP Amendment) that would not designate these areas as ACECs. In Alternatives 3 and 6, the BLM considered different management strategies for the ACECs under consideration, with Alternative 3 generally providing the highest level of restrictions on development and other land uses and Alternative 6 providing a high level of restrictions but allowing for slightly more opportunities for use. See Final EIS Appendix 5, Table 5-2 for more detail. The BLM analyzed the potential effects to the relevant and important values of the GRSG habitat under these alternatives.

The Approved RMP Amendment does not designate any ACECs. Instead, the 110,162-acres identified for the proposed Carter Crook ACEC will be managed in the Approved RMP Amendment as 92% PHMA and 8% SCHMA, and the 615,888-acres identified for the South Valley Phillips potential ACEC will instead be managed entirely as PHMA. As PHMA and SCHMA, the Carter Crook and South Valley Phillips areas will

be managed as exclusion for utility-scale solar and utility-scale wind development, with exceptions, and as exclusion for surface disturbing or disruptive activities within 0.6 miles of active leks or within crucial winter range, and avoidance in existing corridors or ROWs. For fluid mineral development, the areas will be managed as NSO for fluid mineral development with no exceptions within 0.6 miles of leks. Outside of the 0.6-mi NSO buffer WEMs will be allowed, along with seasonal limitations in breeding, nesting, early brood-rearing and winter habitat and in PHMA a controlled surface use (CSU) for the density and disturbance of uses. These areas will be closed to new non-energy leasable mineral development but expansion of existing operations is allowed. These areas will be closed to new large-scale saleable minerals/mineral materials operations but open for new free use permits and for the expansion of existing pits. Compared to alternatives with special management for nominated ACECs, projects can seek approval under the exceptions to these restrictions or less-protective allocations, particularly for utility-scale solar, utility-scale wind, non-energy leasable mineral development, fluid mineral development, and ROWs. Any projects in these areas will be carefully evaluated during project specific NEPA and will be subject to the broad suite of management actions developed for GRSG conservation in HMAs. Therefore, these restrictions from potential development and limited exceptions designed to ensure GRSG habitat is maintained, will protect the relevant and important values of the areas under the Approved RMP Amendment.

Rationale Conclusion

Considered comprehensively, the HMA designations and the allocations and management direction in the Approved RMP Amendment best meet the purpose and need for this planning effort by using updated science and cooperating agency, public feedback, and BLM implementation experience, to provide management direction that, when used in concert with existing GRSG management direction that is not being amended, will be applied where it will be the most effective for conserving GRSG habitat across the species range while being responsive to the habitat variability, threats, and public land uses in the Montana/Dakotas planning area.

CHANGES AND CLARIFICATIONS MADE BETWEEN PROPOSED RMP AMENDMENT/FINAL EIS AND APPROVED RMP AMENDMENT/ROD

The Approved RMP Amendment contains changes and clarifications since the Proposed RMP Amendment published on November 15, 2024, described in the sections below. These changes were made as a result of coordination with the states and to improve alignment of state and federal legal authorities, policies, and programs. The BLM carefully reviewed each of the changes to determine if they would result in significant effects outside the range of effects analyzed in the Proposed RMPA/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The BLM has determined that the analysis described in the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS is inclusive of the effects that would occur because of these changed management actions and supplemental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act is not needed. Consistent with 43 CFR 1610.2(f)(5) and 1610.5-1(b), significant changes to the proposed management direction published in the Proposed RMP Amendment were published for public comment on September 2, 2025, for a 30-day comment period. A summary of the substantive comments received on the proposed changes and the BLM's response can be found in **Appendix 11**, Summary of Public Comments on the Proposed Changes Between Proposed RMPA and ROD.

In addition to the significant changes described below, the BLM also made clarifications and edits to the text of the Approved RMP Amendment. These clarifications are described below in the "Clarifications and Edits Between Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS and Approved RMP Amendment/ROD" section. These clarifications and the edits made are neither substantive nor significant and therefore do not require that the BLM provide the public with further opportunity to comment.

Significant Changes Between Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS and Approved RMP Amendment/ROD

Two changes were made to the Proposed RMP Amendment. Section 202 of FLPMA and its implementing regulations require the BLM to develop, amend, and revise land use plans to be consistent with State and local plans to the maximum extent consistent with federal law and the purposes of FLPMA. This planning effort involved extensive coordination and consultation with State representatives, including modifying the RMPA to improve consistency with the State plan.

These changes were within the range of alternatives considered in the Final EIS, and the BLM determined were substantially significant to warrant a public notice and comment period consistent with the BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-1(b). As a result, the BLM published a notice in the Federal Register on September 3, 2025, notifying the public of these changes and providing a 30-day comment period. The results of the comment period are described in the Public Involvement section below.

PHMA with Limited Exceptions: The BLM does not include the identification of PHMA with limited exceptions and the associated PHMA with limited exceptions management direction that was identified in the Proposed RMP Amendment in the Approved RMP Amendment. Several states found the identification of PHMA with limited exceptions and the additional protections provided for these areas to be unnecessary; potentially inconsistent with state and local plans, policies, or programs; and was a primary reason the states could not support the Proposed RMP Amendment. A coordinated management approach between the BLM and the states is paramount to achieving GRSG conservation across its range. As detailed above in the purpose and need, consistent and effective rangewide conservation is one of BLM's primary purposes in undertaking this RMP Amendment process. In addition, protection for PHMA included in the Approved RMP was increased as compared to the Draft Preferred Alternative and there is a requirement to conduct additional NEPA on future projects that would fully analyze impacts to GRSG and its habitat. Therefore, in the spirit of promoting consistent and coordinated GRSG conservation across its range and to allow the BLM and the states to move forward together, consistent with 43 CFR 1610.3-12, the BLM removed PHMA with limited exceptions and all associated management direction from the Approved RMP Amendment. These areas will be identified as PHMA and are subject to the management allocations and direction for PHMA (refer to **Table 1** and **Table 2** in the Approved RMP Amendment).

Adaptive Management: The adaptive management language was changed from the Proposed RMPAs for Idaho, Montana/Dakotas, Nevada/California, Utah, and Wyoming to improve consistent rangewide adaptive management. The BLM has closely coordinated with the Western Governors Association Sage-grouse Conservation Task Force (Task Force) to better align the BLM's adaptive management process with state policies and programs to manage GRSG populations. States expressed a need to clarify how state adaptive management approaches would be incorporated into the BLM's adaptive management process, and several states expressed concern with using the targeted annual warning system (TAWS) model and a desire to use models maintained and controlled by state wildlife agencies for GRSG population calculations. The BLM worked closely with the Task Force to develop an adaptive management approach that recognizes state governments' authority to manage GRSG populations while remaining consistent with the BLM's adaptive management process in the Oregon and Colorado Approved RMP Amendments. In response to public comments, see **Appendix 11**, the adaptive management appendix was updated to clarify that activation of habitat thresholds will be verified through the existing Causal Factor Analysis (CFA) process, that routine maintenance and operations of electric utilities is considered an exception to threshold responses, and that grazing permits may be renewed for the duration of the CFA while a CFA is ongoing. The revised Adaptive

Management language for Montana/Dakotas is included in **Table 1** of the Approved RMP Amendment and **Appendix 10**.

Clarifications and Edits Between Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS and Approved RMP Amendment/ROD

ALL HMA Allocations and Management Direction (Approved RMP Amendment Table 1)

- **Edits to the GRSG Goal:** Replaced "Conserve, enhance, restore" with language directly from FLPMA, removed the reference to BLM manual 6500, and integrated the connectivity concept into a comma-list rather than a stand-alone sentence. These edits retain the desired condition sought in the original goal (habitat that supports connected, persistent and healthy populations), and improve alignment with FLPMA's statutory language. The comma list of "conserve, enhance, restore" are all versions of management; splitting them out does not clarify the agency's desired condition. These edits focus on the agency's desired outcome, regardless of the most applicable managerial tool. Finally, as a special status species, GRSG are associated with the BLM's 6840 manual, and not the 6500 wildlife and fisheries manual. Since these edits retain the original desired condition, the changes are not significant.
- **Special Status Species:** The first sentence of the second management action in the Surface Disturbing Activities section was clarified by adding "including coordination with the appropriate state authority" to explicitly state that a "consistent approach" to evaluating projects includes working with state GRSG management authorities (e.g., the Montana GRSG Habitat Conservation Program).
- **Predation:** Management Action 2 was adjusted for clarity. The first sentence was adjusted to clarify non-routine maintenance and to better explain which projects require proponents to submit a predator subsidy management plan. The management action was also clarified to focus the purpose of the plan on predator subsidies. A definition of "non-routine maintenance" was also added to the **Glossary, Appendix 7**. Management action 3 was edited to remove the parenthetical example of predation impacts on GRSG for clarity.
- **Livestock Grazing:** The BLM removed the clause after the semicolon in the allocation section as it duplicated the already stated allocation. In addition, the second and third sentences in the second paragraph in Allocation RM-1 was removed. These sentences present a comma list of potential adjustments the BLM considers "in conformance with [BLM's grazing] regulations." The last sentence of Allocation RM-1 was then merged at the end of the retained sentence. The last sentence refers the reader to Appendix 5, which includes grazing best management practices, many of which include items from the deleted comma list. Therefore deletion of these sentences is not significant due to the lack of RMP-decision, avoids repetition of regulation and policy, and duplication with Appendix 5.
  BLM revised the language in the third sentence of management direction RM-2 to better articulate the management direction's consistency with BLM regulations and policy.
  RM-3 was revised to replace "functional projects" with "range improvements" to avoid any confusion about the subject of the management action and keep terminology consistent.
  In addition, the sentence in RM-4 to "focus authorization…on projects that have a nominal or incidental effects" was removed due to the use of the unclear terms of focus, nominal and incidental. Based on experience implementing the 2015 ARMPAs, the use of these undefined and ambiguous terms results in confusion and inconsistency during implementation. The removal of this sentence is not significant, as the overall intent of RM-4 is retained in the absence of this sentence, specifically that "new…improvements should be placed along existing disturbance corridors on in the least suitable habitat…"

Finally, the management direction RM-6 was removed from the Approved RMP Amendment. It was removed to simplify the RMP amendment by removing range management actions that merely re-state the BLM's existing authorities. This change is not significant because nothing in RM-6 compels or requires the BLM to select a specific course of action if relinquishment occurs, only to consider a course of action, which is a re-statement of BLM's authorities under existing grazing regulations. The BLM will continue to follow applicable law, regulations, and policy when implementing grazing decisions on public lands.

- **Mitigation:** The mitigation language from the Final EIS Proposed RMP Amendment was updated to reflect the mitigation standard from Alternative 5, the preferred alternative to better align with the state plans and policies. In addition, the Proposed RMP Amendment mitigation language was adjusted to account for changes in regulation and BLM policies by removing references to the rescinded CEQ NEPA regulations, the recission of the 2024 version (6-142) of BLM Manual 6840 and reversion to the 2008 version (Rel – 6-125), temporary removal and review of the BLM Mitigation Handbook and Manual, and changes to DOI NEPA policy. Edits included adjustments to language to clearly convey BLM's intent for the GRSG mitigation approach. The intent of this plan amendment remains to seek to avoid and minimize impacts first. Compensatory mitigation in arid sagebrush ecosystems is challenging, often taking decades to achieve with no guarantee of durability and is not appropriate in all situations. The objective for SSS-GRSG (see **ARMPA Table 1**) states actions in HMAs should be neutral or beneficial to GRSG. Therefore, updates to the mitigation framework and objective provide consistency to other management actions as well as reflecting that for residual impacts after avoidance what level of compensatory mitigation is required, consistent with state policy. The BLM's clarification about how it will approach compensatory mitigation also emphasizes collaboration with states to ensure a unified approach that meets requirements across jurisdictions. These edits align more closely with Montana/Dakotas state specific circumstances. Likewise, due to the details required in implementing the collaborate BLM approach to mitigation, the approach is more clearly referred to as a framework rather than a hierarchy.

PHMA Allocations and Management Direction (Approved RMP Amendment Table 2)

- **Fluid Minerals Objective:** Changed "…avoid, minimize, and compensate for adverse impacts to GRSG habitat to the extent practical under the law…" to read "…avoid when practicable, then minimize and compensate for adverse impacts to GRSG habitat to the extent required under the law…" The change clarifies that complete avoidance (i.e., closure to leasing) was not the intent of this objective. The change clarifies that avoidance is an important tool, but it is just one of the tools to mitigate impacts to GRSG from fluid mineral development. The change of "practical" to "required" more accurately connects the mitigation tools in this objective to actual statutory requirements instead of just practicality. In addition, the italicized text that was included in the Final EIS was moved to the ROD, as it was merely for the reader comprehension when comparing alternatives, which is no longer an issue in the Approved RMP Amendment, but is important to explain the rational for the decision.
- **Fluid Minerals:** The BLM added "controlled surface use (CSU), and Timing Limitations (TL)" to the end of the fluid mineral allocation to better specify the conditions that fluid mineral development is subject to within PHMA". These conditions are not new and were previously described elsewhere in the Proposed RMP Amendment. The full allocation now reads, "Open to leasing subject to no surface occupancy (NSO) (unless otherwise closed), controlled surface use (CSU), and timing limitations (TL)."

- **Fluid Minerals Allocation and Management Direction:** Renamed the Allocation and Management Direction sections to read "Allocations for Unleased Lands" to more clearly associate stipulations with unleased lands. The clarification was also noted in Appendix 6. The edits only improve readability to better distinguish allocations and management actions that apply to unleased lands versus development in areas already leased.

  In the second paragraph under the "Development in Areas Already Leased" section, revised the first sentence by removing the example and focusing on the outcomes being sought. Deleted the second sentence as it merely provided some approaches that could be taken to achieve the outcomes from the first sentence ("to promote effective management and connectivity of seasonal habitats and PHMA to accomplish measurable GRSG conservation objectives"). The last sentence was edited to improve clarity of intent, as the original wording was unclear. These edits relate to improving clarity or removing examples, and the underlying condition being sought has not changed, therefore these edits are not significant.

  Text was also edited to clarify that BLM will also work with the appropriate state authority to accomplish GRSG objectives that are reasonable and consistent with surface use rights as part of the environmental review process. This direction is already provided in regulation and only clarifies BLM's regulatory responsibilities.
- **Non-energy Leasable Minerals:** "Apply required design features, best management practices, and minimization measures identified in the existing GRSG Resource Management Plans (refer to **Appendix 2**)" was added as Management Direction. This direction was previously included in GHMA only and was inadvertently omitted from inclusion in PHMA in the Proposed RMP Amendment. BLM added this direction to clarify that these measures apply for non-energy leasable minerals projects in both PHMA and GHMA.
- **Rights-of-Way Avoidance Criteria:** Clarifications were made for readability to better describe 'co-location' within existing corridors and ROWs for Major ROWs. Minor edits to terminology referencing the mitigation hierarchy and "Qualified Biologist" were also made for range wide consistency that reflect clarifications and edits made in the "Mitigation" and Qualified Biologist" section below. These edits do not change the management direction or intent of the Avoidance Criteria.

  The fourth avoidance criteria for minor ROWs initially read "the ROW can be routed through, or located within unsuitable habitat and lacks the ecological potential to become suitable habitat…" The language was changed to read "…or located within non-habitat or unsuitable habitat." These changes were made to better align with the fluid mineral WEMs. This change is not significant, as unsuitable habitat that ecologically cannot become suitable would not be habitat, which is already included in the category of non-habitat. In addition, the text of the second bullet also reads "ROWs shall not disrupt connectivity between habitat areas…" This was edited to read "ROWs shall minimize disruption of connectivity…" Completely eliminating any impact to connectivity movements can only be accomplished through not allowing any development. If that was the agency's intent, the area would have been allocated as ROW exclusion. Since the intent of this action is to allow for consideration of development under specific criteria conditions, the text was changed to improve consistency with intent, while retaining the need to protect connectivity between populations.
- **Disturbance Cap:** Added "anthropogenic" as a modifier to the management direction related to "direct habitat disturbance" to further clarify that the disturbance being considered in the 3% project and fine-scale cap is that associated with anthropogenic infrastructure. In addition, clarified the

Disturbance Cap Denominator section in the fourth paragraph by replacing the word "otherwise" at the end of the first sentence with language more specific about how non-habitat will be accounted for in disturbance cap calculations. These edits simply clarify otherwise less clear language. Finally, in the list of conditions associated with granting an exception to the disturbance cap, sub-bullets "d" and "f" were combined, as they addressed similar conditions, as well as the condition already stated in "a".

In the disturbance cap numerator section, the bullet for "military range facilities and infrastructure" was removed to reduce redundancy with items included in the state disturbance calculation process, identified in the last bullet and to avoid identified confusion with the term "range." Since implementing the 2015 disturbance cap, no areas in this category on Department of War administered lands have been documented in PHMA by the BLM. In addition, there are no acres of Department of War-administered lands overlapping PHMA in Utah, Nevada, North Dakota, Montana, or Wyoming. As such, there is no potential for these types of disturbances on Department of War lands in PHMA. In Idaho and South Dakota, a small fraction of the total HMA acres where the disturbance cap applies are Department of War lands (12 acres in Idaho PHMA, 204 acres of South Dakota PHMA, and 11,143 acres of Idaho IHMA). Military infrastructure on BLM-administered lands would only be included in the cap if such was considered disturbance under a state approach, which is included as the last bullet of numerator items.

- **Utility Scale Solar and Wind:** The allocation for both utility scale wind and solar development remains unchanged as exclusion; the exception criteria for the exclusion allocation were removed for both wind and solar. Given the nature of the updated GRSG habitat management areas and the amount of land needed for utility scale wind and solar developments, including exceptions to the exclusion allocation is misleading. While there are areas of non-habitat and unsuitable habitat, they are generally small, non-contiguous patches. Combined with the known impacts of large solar and wind developments, and especially the indirect impacts on adjacent lands, there is very little likelihood that any areas could meet the exceptions. Therefore, removing these exceptions is not a significant change considering potential impacts to both GRSG and wind and solar development. In addition, any exception associated with non-habitat would be redundant with the Criteria Based Management for Non-Habitat.

  In the instance of smaller solar projects developed as ancillary support for other approved uses (e.g., mineral development, data centers), narrow exceptions consistent with the fluid mineral NSO exceptions were retained. Such developments can be used to electrify remote mineral developments and can be used in place of constructing powerlines. Any such developments, if proposed, would have similar impacts to those associated with fluid minerals development, so this change is not significant.
- **References to a "qualified biologist":** References to criteria and conditions being determined by a "qualified biologist" contained no definition for education and experience standards. Rather than using this undefined term, it was changed throughout the document to read "wildlife biologist" with the understanding that an individual with education and qualifications in wildlife biology will understand the scientific principles needed to perform the needed tasks.
- **References to specific positions for certain tasks:** Several management actions identified specific BLM positions to complete certain tasks. While all these required actions were retained, task assignments to a specific position were removed. The RMP is not the correct document to establish a delegated authority for specific tasks to specific positions. Beyond authorities specifically described in regulations – generally the "Authorized Officer" or "State Director" – the BLM will

comply with agency defined delegations of authority when implementing the RMP. Since the various actions were all retained, there is no effect of removing the BLM position that implements an action.

- **UMRBNM Allocations:** The specific reference to the UMRBNM or language such as "unless otherwise closed" in allocations were removed from resource topics to avoid confusion. These uses are excluded from the Monument due to the establishing proclamation and the subsequent Resource Management Plan. This Approved RMP Amendment does not change the original allocations.

GHMA Allocations and Management Direction (Approved RMP Amendment Table 3)

- **Fluid Minerals Objective:** Changed N/A to "Same as PHMA (Table 2)" to clarify the fluid minerals objective applies to each HMA type as written in the objective text.
- **Livestock Grazing:** BLM corrected an error in the management direction number referenced in Table 2 for livestock grazing management. Previously the language said, "Same as PHMA except RM-3 does not apply" and now it correctly reads, "Same as PHMA except RM-2 does not apply."
- **UMRBNM Allocations:** The specific UMRBNM allocations were removed from the resource topics of Utility Scale Solar, Utility Scale Wind, and Fluid Minerals to avoid confusion. These uses are excluded from UNRBNM due to the establishing proclamation and the subsequent RMP. This Approved RMP Amendment does not change the original allocations.

Other: Across the RMP Amendment, BLM made several revisions in developing the Montana/Dakotas-specific Approved RMP Amendment from the rangewide Proposed RMP Amendment. These clarifications include:

- Additional detail when referencing previous GRSG-related RMP Amendments.
- Appendices were renumbered, and small editorial changes were made to introductory text,
- **Appendix 2,** The BLM updated Appendix 2 specific to Montana/Dakotas to update the crosswalk comparison of what goals, objectives, and actions are changing compared to 2015 Approved RMP Amendment actions, including full text associated with the Approved RMP Amendments.
- **Appendix 4**, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Indicators and Benchmarks (Appendix 8 in the Final EIS) was edited for clarity and accuracy. In the Final EIS this appendix included all states but was reduced to be specific to Montana/Dakotas for the ROD. Several benchmarks were edited to remove ambiguity (i.e., identifying if a benchmark is greater than or greater than or equal to).
- **Appendix 5**, Livestock Grazing Best Management Practices and Design Features, was edited for clarity. The introduction of Appendix 5 was edited to clarify that the livestock grazing strategies, practices, or design features are presented as tools but are not required to be considered and dismissed for every action, as the required design features were from the 2015 ARMPA. Section 5.1.1 Coordination was edited to remove duplication. In addition, the BMPs were edited to eliminate duplication of concepts and clarify implementation in coordination of livestock grazing practices with non-BLM agencies and landowners. Where BMPs duplicate management elsewhere in the document, they were removed. This is most evident in the deletion of section 5.1.5 that summarized principles from the BLM's 2004 National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy. That section's concepts are included in management actions in the Approved RMP Amendment and bullets in Appendix 5.
- **Appendix 6**, Montana/Dakotas Fluid Minerals Lease Stipulations (Appendix 16 in the Final EIS) was edited to incorporate WEM language from Chapter 2 of the Final EIS into the applicable sections of the stipulations. Stipulations were reorganized for consistent order of WEMs. Language was added to explicitly describe cooperation with appropriate state authorities and clarify the intent, approach of stipulations. Since BLM is not including the identification of PHMA with limited exceptions and

the associated PHMA with limited exceptions management direction that was identified in the Proposed RMP Amendment in the Approved RMP Amendment, these stipulations have been removed from **Appendix 6**. Minor edits consistent with Fluid Minerals section above have also been incorporated.

The text in Appendix 6 explicitly identifying a 30-day public review period prior to granting the NSO or disturbance cap waiver, exception and modification was revised. The new text states that "Prior to waiving the NSO stipulation for a given area, the Authorized Officer shall comply with regulatory public review requirements, if applicable (see 43 CFR 3101" This change is not significant because the BLM's fluid mineral regulations in the cited section already requires Authorized Officers to provide at least a 30-day public review opportunity prior to granting exceptions (i.e., one-time waivers) and modifications for changes that involve "an issue of major concern to the public" or "…a change to a lease term or stipulation that is substantial…" Because this direction is already in regulation, there is no need to repeat it in the RMP. Approvals of Exceptions was also modified to remove a list of what coordination entails. There was no need to provide examples of types and sources of information.

In the PHMA NSO and GHMA Winter Range NSO stipulations the exception language "The project is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to an off-BLM location in PHMA/LMHMA/SCHMA and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG" was replaced with "The proposed location on public lands would be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby non-public lands parcel (e.g., due to ownership patterns), and development on the public parcel in question would eliminate impacts on more important and/or limited GRSG habitat (e.g., wet meadows, brood-rearing habitat) on the non-public nearby parcel; this exception must also include measures sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude in its documenting analysis that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts on public lands (e.g., confirmation of an easement)." This edit was made to avoid confusion with mitigation terminology and to provide consistency with exception language in other BLM states.

Finally, the Appendix 6, text for the PHMA NSO exception in the second paragraph after the bullet list states the Authorized Officer must "document the review of available information associated with the site proposed for the exception – both internally compiled and as provided by state, county and other local agencies, tribal governments, project proponents, other federal agencies, or interested stakeholders as appropriate - and determine that the proposed action satisfies at least one of the criteria listed above." The text between "…document…" and "…that the proposed…" was deleted. This change was made to remove implementation process language that is not appropriate for inclusion in RMPs. The parties from which the BLM accepts information is guided by statute, regulation, and policy. Because the removed language is process (how something will be done, not what will be done), its removal is not significant as the standard that must be met to grant either exception remains.

- The term "active" was removed as a qualifier from multiple instances where "active lek" was used. The BLM made this change for clarity and for consistency (i.e., active was not used in all instances to describe leks). **Table 1** in the Approved RMP Amendment already clarified that "unless otherwise specifically noted" lek means active lek.
- Montana/Dakotas-specific modifications to rangewide text, previously described separately in the Proposed RMP Amendment, were integrated directly into the language in the Approved RMP

Amendment. This includes direct edits to the text of objectives, allocations, and management direction, as well as additions of Montana/Dakotas-specific HMA direction. Additionally:

- **HMAs**: Montana/Dakotas details of PHMA and GHMA were added to the definitions and clarifications were made to the definition of UHMA.
- **UHMAs**: Management Actions SSS-Y (LMHMA and SCHMA) and SSS-X (CHMA) were deleted. These management actions explained resource topic direction for the Montana/Dakotas UHMAs (i.e., whether management was the same as GHMA or PHMA). UHMA management is now contained under each specific resource topic.
- **UHMAs Minerals**: Objectives, Allocations, and Management Direction were added to Fluid Minerals and Locatable minerals. This direction was previously included in PHMA and GHMA only but was not explicitly included in UHMA in the Proposed RMP Amendment. BLM added this direction to clarify that these measures apply in UHMA and to provide the specifics of management in UHMAs is each specific resource topic instead of referring to other HMA types.
- **Appendix 7, Glossary:** Montana/Dakotas-specific definitions were added and terms removed that were not applicable to the ROD/ARMPA

MITIGATION

The BLM has adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm in the Approved RMP Amendment. In determining the scope of the planning effort, BLM identified habitat mitigation as an element considered for amendment to meet the purpose and need of responding to updated scientific information and changing land uses and providing for consistent and effective rangewide conservation based on biological information that is responsive to locally relevant habitat variability. The BLM focused on habitat mitigation as sagebrush habitat fragmentation, loss and disturbance have been identified as the primary influences on long-term GRSG population trends (Knick and Hanser 2011). Therefore, as mitigation was within the scope of the RMP Amendment, the BLM considered a range of alternatives for mitigation strategies to best address the purpose and need and analyzed potential impacts of each alternative in the EIS (See Final EIS Appendix 21 for more detail).

As described above, the BLM determined the management direction, identified in the Proposed RMP Amendment, with the changes as described, in combination with the mitigation standard from Alternative 5, best meets the purpose and need and has decided to select it in this Approved RMP Amendment. The Approved RMP Amendment thus establishes the habitat and mitigation objectives and management actions below and provides additional detail on the application of the mitigation framework during project implementation (see **Table 1** in the Approved RMP Amendment).

Consistent with FLPMA, as amended, the BLM's Resource Management Planning Regulations at 43 CFR 1610, and BLM policy in the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1), all resource management authorizations and actions, and subsequent more detailed or specific planning must conform to the Approved RMP. Therefore, by establishing this enforceable RMP direction, the BLM has adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Tribal Government Consultation

There are approximately 40 potentially affected federally recognized Tribes who have an interest in the Montana/Dakotas portion of the planning area: Nez Perce; Shoshone-Bannock; Blackfeet Nation; Rocky Boy; Confederated Salish and Kootenai; Crow Tribe; Ft. Belknap Indian Community; Fort Peck Tribes; Little Shell

Chippewa Tribes; Northern Cheyenne Tribe; Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara nation; Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe; Standing Rock Sioux Tribe; Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa; Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe; Crow Creek Sioux Tribe; Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe; Lower Brule Sioux Tribe; Rosebud Sioux Tribe; Oglala Sioux Tribe; Sisseton-Wahpteton Oyate; Yankton Sioux Tribe; Eastern Shoshone Tribe; Northern Arapaho Nation; Santee Sioux Tribe; Lower Sioux Indian Community; Confederated Tribes of the Colville Nation; Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Comanche Nation; and Kiowa Nation. BLM sought to initiate Tribal consultation efforts in the preparation of this RMP Amendment and coordinated with these Tribes on the planning effort in accordance with BLM Manual 8130 (BLM 2004) and Handbook 1780 (BLM 2016a). The BLM contacted the Tribes by mail, email, and/or phone at multiple stages in the planning process (direct outreach, official Scoping period, Draft RMP Amendment/ Draft EIS comment period, and during administrative review periods). Subsequent outreach continued through emails, phone calls, and meetings with Tribal personnel, as they have expressed interest. The BLM received inquiries for maps, data and associated information about the project. None of the Tribes entered into formal government-to-government consultation or cooperating agency agreements on the planning effort.

On September 4, 2024, the BLM held an online information session for Tribal governments to provide an update on the development of the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS. Individuals from the Ely Shoshone Tribe, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation, Colville Tribes, Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, Moapa Band of Paiutes, Modoc Nation, and the Gros Ventre & Assinboine Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Community attended the informational meeting.

State Historic Preservation Office Coordination

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 govern the BLM's cultural resource management programs. These regulations provide specific procedures for consultation between the BLM and State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO). The Montana/Dakotas State Office coordinated with the Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota SHPO in accordance with the state-specific protocols on this plan amendment effort and in accordance with the National Programmatic Agreement between the BLM, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers. The BLM has met its obligations under Section 106 of the NHPA, 54 U.S.C. § 306108, as outlined in the National Programmatic Agreement (PA) and the State Protocol. The Approved RMP Amendment will not approve any site-specific actions on BLM-administered lands within the planning area. The BLM will satisfy the requirements of NHPA Section 106 for future implementation-level decisions, such as project proposals, including adequate consultation with SHPOs, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), Native American Tribes, and other interested parties, consistent with the alternative procedures set forth in the National PA and relevant State Protocol and where applicable the Section 106 regulations.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Consultation

Under Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA, federal agencies must consult with USFWS when an action the agency carries out, funds, or authorizes may affect any federally listed or endangered species or its critical habitat. The Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS describes potential impacts on threatened and endangered species because of management actions proposed in the alternatives. The USFWS is a cooperating agency in this planning process. The BLM has met with the USFWS and provided them with drafts of proposed management direction for discussion and input.

The BLM initiated Section 7 consultation with the USFWS on August 14, 2023, before the release of the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS and requested concurrence on which species would require consideration during consultation. Over the ensuing months, regular meetings were held to identify the species that would

be analyzed in the biological assessment, to address which actions could affect those species, and to determine whether the implementation of the Proposed RMP Amendment "may affect" the species for which this consultation occurred.

The BLM submitted the biological assessment to the USFWS on November 19, 2024, with an amendment submitted on December 6, 2024, for review on whether the Proposed RMP Amendment would affect a Federally listed, proposed, or candidate species. The USFWS evaluated the biological assessment and concurred with either a "no effect" or "may affect, but not likely to adversely affect" determination via memorandum for all states within the planning area on December 9, 2024. Based on change to BLM's Proposed RMP Amendment, summarized in the **Changes and Clarifications** section above, the USFWS provided a revised concurrence memorandum on January 8, 2025. On September 10, 2025, BLM provided an updated memo and Biological Assessment for the GRSG Rangewide Planning effort and the Proposed Changes document. On October 22, 2025, USFWS provided a concurrence letter concluding informal consultation on BLM's Greater Sage-grouse Rangewide Planning Changes to Proposed RMPA for Idaho, Montana/Dakotas, Nevada/California, Utah, and Wyoming document. On December 8, 2025, the USFWS reviewed the changes made in response to public comments and DOI review and stated that they did not need to re-issue a concurrence memorandum. This memorandum is included as **Appendix 9** in this Approved RMP Amendment.

Cooperating Agencies

In December 2021 and January 2022, the BLM invited Tribal governments and state and local agencies with jurisdiction by either law or special expertise, or both, to participate as cooperating agencies in the planning process. A cooperating agency can be a Tribe, federal, state, or local government agency with jurisdiction by law or special expertise that assists a lead federal agency in developing an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement (43 CFR 1610.3-1(b). The BLM invited many cooperators to engage in this effort who either did not reply or chose not to participate.

Coordination with the cooperating agencies has included project presentations and working meetings discussing the purpose and need, new science, alternative strategies, range of alternatives, review of alternative text, meetings to review subsequent changes and further refine the alternatives, and a review of the administrative Draft RMP Amendment/EIS. Since the release of the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS, the BLM has met with cooperating agencies to discuss their feedback on the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS and get their input on the development of the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS and state-specific management direction. Cooperating agencies were provided an administrative draft of the Proposed RMP Amendment management direction for review. As a result of these reviews and the many state-level meetings with cooperating agencies, the BLM made many changes to the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS that improved the clarity of the document and addressed cooperating agency concerns.

Details on the full process followed for cooperating agency invitation, engagement, and participation can be found in the Final EIS in Chapter 5, Section 5.4 Cooperating Agencies.

Federal cooperating agencies included the United States Forest Service, USFWS, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Specific to Montana/Dakotas, cooperating agencies included:

- Blaine County Commission
- Bowman-Slope Conservation District
- Fergus County Commission
- McCone County Commissioners

- Montana Department of Agriculture
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Livestock
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- Montana Grass Conservation Commission
- Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Program
- North Dakota Game and Fish Department
- Phillips County Commission
- Prairie County Commissioners
- Rosebud County Commissioners
- Slope County Commissioners
- Sweet Grass County Commissioners
- Valley County Commission

Governor's Consistency Review

The BLM's planning regulations require that BLM RMPs and RMP Amendments be "consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans, and the policies and procedures contained therein, of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian Tribes, so long as the guidance and resource management plans also are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands" (43 CFR 1610.3-2(a)).

The BLM made the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS available to the Governors of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana for a 60-day consistency review as required by 43 CFR 1610.3-2(e). The Governor's consistency review of the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS ran for 60 days from November 8, 2024 through January 7, 2025. The Governors of North Dakota and South Dakota did not submit a letter to the BLM that raised concerns about potential inconsistencies between the Proposed RMP Amendment and state policies. The Governor of Montana submitted a letter to the BLM Montana State Director that raised concerns about potential inconsistencies between the Proposed RMP Amendment and state policies. On January 17, 2025, the BLM Montana State Director responded to concerns and issues identified in the Governor's letter. The Governor did not submit an appeal of the State Director's consistency response to the BLM Director. The BLM met with representatives from the Montana Governor's Office to discuss their concerns and identify solutions. The clarifying language and changes to the RMP Amendment identified during the consistency review are included in the **Clarifications and Changes** section of this ROD. The BLM and the Governor's Office also committed to an ongoing dialogue on issues of interest to the State.

RMP Amendment Monitoring

RMP monitoring is the process of tracking the implementation of RMP decisions (implementation monitoring) and collecting data/information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of land use plan decisions (effectiveness monitoring) in meeting the purpose and need of the plan or plan amendment. Monitoring strategies for GRSG habitat and populations must be collaborative, as habitat occurs across jurisdictional boundaries. As part of the 2015 GRSG amendment effort, the BLM developed a Monitoring Framework to provide consistent approaches to monitor planning actions across the range (BLM 2015a). In 2021, the BLM published the *Greater Sage-Grouse Plan Implementation Rangewide Monitoring Report for 2015-2020* with the results of implementing the 2015 monitoring framework. As part of this amendment process, the BLM revisited the approaches in the monitoring framework and updated it based on lessons learned over the past

eight years. The updated monitoring framework is in **Appendix 3**. The BLM's monitoring efforts will continue in partnership with federal and state fish and wildlife agencies.

Monitoring data are used to draw conclusions on whether management actions are being implemented, and if they are helping to meet the stated objectives. Conclusions are then used to recommend whether to continue current management or to identify what changes may need to be made to meet objectives. The BLM will use land use plan evaluations to determine if the decisions in the RMP Amendment may need to be amended in light of new information and monitoring data. The plan evaluations will follow the protocols established by the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1), Manual 1735 Inventory and Monitoring of Ecological Resources, or other appropriate guidance in effect at the time the evaluation is initiated.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In addition to the extensive collaboration with federal, state, local, and Tribal governments and cooperating agencies detailed above, the BLM provided numerous opportunities for public involvement throughout the development of the RMP Amendment and EIS. The Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS and this Approved RMP Amendment were substantially shaped based on input provided by the public.

Project Website

The BLM maintains a national GRSG conservation website (https://www.blm.gov/programs/fish-and-wildlife/sage-grouse) as part of its efforts to maintain and restore GRSG habitat on public lands. The site is intended to help the public learn how the BLM is working on maintaining and restoring GRSG habitat. It includes background information related to government and BLM roles in GRSG conservation. In addition to the national GRSG conservation website, the BLM established a National NEPA Register website with information related to this planning effort at https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2016719/510. Throughout the planning process, the BLM maintained both websites to include the most current information, and share background documents, information on public meetings, contact information, and all relevant planning and NEPA-related documents.

Scoping Process

The formal public scoping process began on November 22, 2021, with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) to amend RMPs and prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 86 No. 222). The NOI notified the public of BLM's intent to develop an RMP Amendment for the management of GRSG and initiated the public scoping period, which closed on February 8, 2022. In January 2022, BLM hosted two virtual public meetings, during which BLM provided opportunities to become involved, learn about the project and the planning process, and participate in a question-and-answer session where participants were able to ask BLM specialists questions and receive live responses. During the comment period, the BLM received 258 total submissions containing 1,865 unique comments. The issues identified during public scoping and outreach helped inform the development of the alternatives and the resource issues analyzed in the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS.

Draft RMP Amendment/EIS Comment Period

The BLM released the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS for a 90-day comment period from March 15th, 2024, through June 13th, 2024. Thirteen public meetings were held, including two virtual meetings and eleven in-person meetings throughout the planning area. Over 39,000 submissions were received, including approximately 6,000 individual comments. The BLM has also initiated and/or participated in over 80 meetings with Tribes; federal, state, and county cooperating agencies; and interest groups between the issuance of the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS and Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS. The BLM considered all public comments and responded to all substantive comments in the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS (refer to

Appendix 22, Draft RMP Amendment/EIS Public Outreach and Responses to Substantive Public Comments in the Final EIS). The high level of public comments and high level of stakeholder coordination significantly shaped the RMP Amendment.

Final EIS Availability Period and Proposed RMP Amendment Protest Period

The BLM released the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS on November 8, 2024, and published an associated Federal Register Notice (89 FR 90311) on November 15, 2024. The Final EIS was also identified in the Environmental Protection Agency's November 15, 2024 EIS Availability Federal Register Notice (89 FR 90280).

The public was invited to submit protests on the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS. The protest period was 30 days, from November 15 to December 16, 2024. The BLM received 60 unique protest letters.

The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2 outline the requirements for filing a valid protest. Resolution of protests is delegated to the BLM Assistant Director for Resources and Planning whose decision on the protest is the final decision of the U.S. Department of the Interior (43 CFR 1610.5-2(b)) consistent with the BLM Delegation of Authority Manual (MS-1203 Delegation of Authority). The BLM evaluated all protest letters to determine which protest letters were complete and timely, and which people have standing to protest. Four letters were complete and timely but were dismissed because the people who submitted the letters did not have standing to protest. The remaining 56 letters were complete and timely and were from parties who had standing to protest. Of these, 50 letters contained valid protest issues.

After careful review of the report by the BLM's Assistant Director for Resources and Planning, the Assistant Director concluded that the BLM followed the applicable laws, regulations, and policies and considered all relevant resource information and public input. The Assistant Director documented and addressed the valid protests issues in a protest report: BLM Director's Protest Resolution Report: Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning Proposed RMP Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement which has been posted on the BLM's website: https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/public-participation/protest-resolution-reports. All valid protest issues were denied.

Ongoing Actions

The BLM has numerous ongoing reviews of proposed projects, ranging from proposals for which the BLM has just received an application to those where the BLM is nearing a decision. The extent to which this Approved RMP Amendment will apply to these ongoing projects will depend on the stage of the project in the NEPA review and decision-making process. To maintain the orderly administration and management of the public lands, the BLM will be consistent with the Approved RMP Amendment unless the BLM has a Draft EIS or Environmental Assessment for the project before the publication of the Approved RMP Amendment. The decision for such projects and any subsequent authorizations associated with the approval (such as the issuance of an ROW authorized by a decision) will be exempted from the requirements of this Approved RMP Amendment. The BLM has the discretion to apply the Approved RMP Amendment to projects that are substantially underway and will seek input from the project proponent prior to exercising such discretion.

Availability of the Approved RMP Amendment

Copies of the ROD and the Approved RMP Amendment may be obtained online on the BLM's National NEPA Register at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2016719/510. Limited print copies are available upon request from the Montana/Dakotas State Office; 5001 Southgate Drive; Billings, Montana 59101.

APPROVAL

I hereby certify that BLM has considered all alternatives, information, analyses, and objections submitted by state, Tribal, and local governments, cooperating agencies, and public commenters in developing the environmental impact statement. In consideration of the foregoing, I approve the Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning Resource Management Plan Amendment for Montana/Dakotas.

Sonya I. Germann
State Director, Montana-Dakotas
Bureau of Land Management

Montana/Dakotas Approved RMP Amendment

The Montana/Dakotas Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment amends language relating to certain goals, objectives, allocations and management direction for greater sage-grouse (GRSG) management in response to updated scientific information and changing land uses to provide for effective rangewide conservation. The Approved RMP Amendment provides a set of management direction that best meets the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) purpose of addressing updated scientific information and changing land uses and providing for consistent and effective rangewide GRSG conservation that is responsive to locally relevant habitat variability. Management decisions are updates to provide increased consistency between BLM RMPs within Montana/Dakotas and allow for effective coordination with state and other federal GRSG management approaches. The Approved RMP Amendment describes how the resource topic identified are being amended. In some instances, the Approved RMP Amendment replaces all existing program management, while in other resources management direction is edited or language is added. Management decisions are identified for each resource topic and if it is not amended the existing decision remains in place. See **Appendix 2** for a comparison of existing GRSG related RMP decisions and this amendment.

In the event there are inconsistencies or discrepancies between previously approved RMPs and this Approved RMP Amendment, the decisions contained in this Approved RMP Amendment will be followed, unless there are more restrictive decisions for non-GRSG resources/uses in the existing plans. More restrictive decisions primarily exist within the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM) and in other locations with prior special designations across the planning area. For the UMRBNM, the establishing proclamation withdrew the area "from all forms of entry, location, selection, sale, or leasing or other disposition under the public lands laws," and the area is excluded from utility scale wind and solar energy leasing. Maps (see **Appendix 1**) reflect allocations within the Habitat Management Areas (HMAs) that are more restrictive than those designated by this 2025 Montana/Dakotas Approved RMP Amendment. These more restrictive existing allocations are identified in other BLM RMPs or RMP Amendments for non-GRSG resources and they remain in place and are not amended or vacated by this GRSG Approved RMP Amendment.

The following sections of the Approved RMP Amendment present the goals, objectives, land use allocations, and management actions established for managing GRSG and its habitat on public lands administered by the BLM in Montana/Dakotas. The Approved RMP Amendment begins with designating and defining HMAs that constitute areas where the BLM is applying GRSG direction. Then four tables identify goals, objectives, allocations, and management actions. The tables begin with management that applies to all GRSG habitat (all HMAs) and then each HMA specifically (Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA), General Habitat Management Area (GHMA), Unique Habitat Management Area (UHMA)). Decisions are presented by program area in each table. Several management actions refer to existing laws, regulations, policies, or technical references. The citations in this document are based on the versions current as of ROD publication; the most current versions of these various references would be used during implementation (e.g., in 2025 the Habitat Assessment Framework is TR-6710-1 dated 2015; updated versions of the HAF or its equivalent would be applied to all actions that reference the HAF).

HABITAT MANAGEMENT AREA ALIGNMENTS

The BLM applies its management allocations and management direction for GRSG within HMAs. Although the BLM has identified and mapped the HMAs to encompass multiple land ownerships, reflecting the wide-ranging ecological needs of GRSG, the management allocations and management direction that follow only apply to BLM-administered lands, including areas where BLM administers subsurface minerals. Following are the rangewide (common across BLM units) HMA categories of PHMA and GHMA and the additional, Montana/Dakotas-specific Unique HMAs. Refer to **Appendix I**, Table and Maps.

Rangewide Habitat Management Areas
Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA) have the highest value to maintaining sustainable GRSG populations and can include breeding, late brood-rearing, winter concentration areas, and migration or connectivity corridors. The BLM intent for these areas is to maintain and enhance habitat conditions that will support persistent and healthy GRSG populations through management to minimize habitat loss and degradation. In Montana/Dakotas these include areas with limited impacts containing substantial and high quality GRSG habitats. Areas are delineated using core and connectivity data or maps and other resource information that the BLM has identified in coordination with respective state and federal agencies. HMAs are delineated as approximate boundaries and representations of habitat, and therefore there may be areas of non-habitat contained within these boundaries.
General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA) are lands that are, or have the potential to become, occupied seasonal or year-round habitat outside of PHMA, managed to sustain GRSG populations. These areas are defined differentially by state wildlife management agencies but generally are of poorer GRSG habitat quality with reduced occupancy when compared to PHMA. Some state wildlife agencies have identified areas of GHMA as important for restoration, connectivity, or seasonal habitats. The intent for GHMA is to maintain habitat conditions to support GRSG populations consistent with the state agency designations of recovery, connectivity, or seasonal habitats. In Montana/Dakotas these include areas with or without ongoing or imminent impacts containing seasonal or year-round habitat outside other habitat management areas, including for the purpose of promoting movement and genetic diversity (e.g., ranging from occupied areas with lower habitat and lek density to sporadic use/connectivity areas). Management actions will maintain, enhance, or restore habitat for GRSG. HMAs are delineated as approximate boundaries and representations of habitat and therefore include potential or unoccupied habitat and may contain areas of non-habitat.
Montana/Dakotas
Unique Habitat Management Areas (UHMAs) are areas identified that need different objectives or management to address unique challenges in order to provide/enhance habitat for recovery of GRSG populations. These are areas identified as high-quality habitats with ongoing or imminent impacts but with an emphasis on long-term habitat needs, or where the peripheral nature of the population created management challenges. Due to the unique circumstances, management actions are needed that emphasize long-term reclamation, habitat goals, and connectivity. These include three geographic areas: • Little Missouri HMA: Identified core area by the states of Montana and North Dakota. This area contains high-quality GRSG habitat in Montana and encompasses the remaining GRSG habitat in North Dakota. A substantial portion of the area is the Cedar Creek Anticline unitized oil and gas field. Formerly occupied habitat has been converted or degraded, an outbreak of West Nile Virus impacted bird numbers, and GRSG are challenged by being on the periphery of their range. Unique management and a focus on restoration efforts is needed to maintain connectivity of sagebrush and GRSG habitat between Montana and North Dakota. • South Carter HMA: Identified core area by the state of Montana. This area has a high density of bentonite mining. Unique management is needed to balance GRSG habitat and mineral development in the short term, while planning for longer-term reclamation. • Connectivity HMA: Areas that provide regions of connectivity important to facilitate long-distance movements of GRSG and maintain ecological processes, including between priority populations, adjacent states, and across international borders, including but not limited to Montana Connectivity

Rangewide Habitat Management Areas
areas. This HMA boundary represents where stopover sites may exist, likely within a matrix of degraded or converted habitat or non-habitat (such as in Montana general habitat within the HiLine). Areas are delineated using results from analyses of seasonal migratory movements and habitat characteristics conducive to movements, particularly between silver sagebrush and big sagebrush habitats.

Table 1. Greater Sage Grouse (All HMA) Allocations and Management Direction

This table identifies the allocations and management direction and that will be applied in all GRSG habitat. The table describes if the Approved RMP Amendment is amending the "objective", "allocation", or "management direction" for the resource topic identified. In some instances, the Approved RMP Amendment addresses all three of these planning categories for a resource topic while in other resource topics only one or two of the categories are amended. All three planning categories are identified for each resource topic and if it is not being amended it will be identified as "N/A", not applicable. In those "N/A" instances, the existing decision is not being proposed for amendment and remains in place. In addition, for all three planning categories identified for each resource topic, there may be instances where the decision is already contained in a Resource Management Plan. However, for consistency and continuity across the nine RMPs being amended, they are identified below. The existing RMP decisions are described in **Appendix 2**.

Approved RMP Amendment for GRSG (All HMAs) Objective/Allocation/Management Direction
Goal
Manage lands in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, ecological, and environmental values that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals, and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and uses consistent with Section 102 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (as amended). Manage GRSG habitat to support habitat connectivity and persistent, healthy populations, consistent with BLM's Special Status Species Management Policy (BLM-M-6840) and in coordination and cooperation with state wildlife agencies and appropriate state authorities.
Special Status Species Greater Sage-Grouse
Objective: Maintain, improve, and restore sagebrush habitats to increase habitat availability and quality for GRSG, sagebrush obligates and other sagebrush dependent species. **Objective**: Manage GRSG through collaborative, coordinated efforts that utilize cooperative planning and implement and monitor activities to achieve desired conditions and to maximize the utilization of available funding opportunities. Coordination efforts can include adjacent landowners, federal and state agencies, local governments, tribes, communities, other agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and other interested parties/stakeholders. **Allocation: N/A** **Management Direction:** **MA-1**: GRSG management will be consistent with current adopted BLM conservation strategies, will utilize GRSG conservation plans, as revised or updated, from partners such as the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA; e.g., Sagebrush conservation strategy; Remington et al. 2021), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS; e.g., Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report; USFWS 2013), and state

Approved RMP Amendment for GRSG (All HMAs) Objective/Allocation/Management Direction
wildlife or habitat management agency action, management, or conservation plans (e.g., Montana Executive Order 2015, Montana Sage-Grouse Working Group 2005, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks 2022, North Dakota Game and Fish 2014), and the best available science. **MA-2**: Assess and modify as needed water features to reduce the risk of potential impacts from West Nile Virus or other disease outbreaks (see Required Design Features/Best Management Practices (RDF/BMP) appendix from each RMP).
Special Status Species Greater Sage-Grouse – Surface Disturbing Activities in GRSG Habitat
Objective: Limit overall surface disturbance and disruption that impacts GRSG habitat through factors such as the reduction, co-location, and siting of activities and uses, and the restoration and enhancement of habitat. Actions in HMAs should be neutral or beneficial to GRSG. **Allocation:** N/A **Management Action:** For all activities, in undertaking BLM management actions and consistent with valid and existing rights and applicable law in authorizing actions, the BLM will assess impacts to seasonal habitat and important areas for connectivity (i.e., areas needed to provide and maintain functional dispersal and genetic movement) and apply conservation measures (i.e., applicable BMPs, design features, and conditions of approval (COA); contained in applicable appendices in existing plans) and the mitigation framework to achieve GRSG objectives. In addition, limitations on surface disturbing and disruptive activities include a 0.6-mile exclusion from leks in PHMA, and for all HMAs timing limitations of December 1 through March 15 in winter range and March 15 - July 15 in breeding and nesting habitats. Timing limitations will be assessed and applied as needed for construction and/or operations and maintenance activities. **Management Action:** The BLM will take a consistent approach, including coordination with the appropriate state authority, towards evaluating projects among programs falling in HMAs through utilizing all GRSG management approaches applicable for HMA type, such as allocations, disturbance calculations, population and habitat adaptive management thresholds, mitigation practices, habitat objectives, and the variance/exception approaches contained therein. For evaluations of projects in areas with restricted allocations (i.e., exceptions, avoidance, open with RDFs) approval of the project requires analysis and/or justification that processes and approaches have been met/followed, and that the proposed action satisfies GRSG goals and objectives.
Application of Habitat Objectives
Objective: **Objective SSS [X]:** Within GRSG habitat management areas provide suitable habitat by managing for connected mosaics of sagebrush and associated communities that provide for seasonal habitats, dispersal, and migration, while limiting widespread anthropogenic disturbances and fragmentation. This objective will be accomplished by applying RMP land use allocations and management actions among HMAs, proactive habitat treatments, and project-level application of mitigation (refer to Mitigation direction in this Approved RMP Amendment) for internal and external project proposals. **Objective SSS [Y]:** Manage GRSG habitat management areas to provide seasonal habitats at the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) site-scale (Level 4) by providing for habitat characteristics that support seasonal habitat needs, including adequate protective cover and food needed to survive and reproduce. Seasonal habitats may include areas where sagebrush is the current dominant vegetation type, sagebrush is a primary shrub species within the various states of the ecological site or dominated by other vegetation types but still provides GRSG habitats, such as mesic areas. This objective will be accomplished through the combination of RMP land use allocations and management actions and restoration – based on ecological potential, current vegetative condition, and existing seasonal values – and the project-level application of mitigation (refer to Mitigation direction in this Approved RMP Amendment) for internal and external project proposals.

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Objective/Allocation/Management Direction

Allocation: N/A

Management Direction:
Management Action SSS [X1]: Assess the suitability of GRSG habitat at HAF mid- and fine-scales (HAF Levels 2 and 3, respectively) based on the methods in the Sage-grouse HAF (Stiver et al. 2015, BLM TR 6710-1, as revised; see **Appendix 4**).

Management Action SSS [X2]: Design and implement projects that will maintain or improve habitat suitability, availability, and connectivity based on site location, existing seasonal values, and habitat needs using the results of mid- and fine-scale habitat assessments and other complementary research, tools, or information in coordination with partners across land management jurisdictions.

Management Action SSS [Y1]: Assess suitability of GRSG habitat at the HAF site-scale (Level 4) based on the methods in the Sage-grouse HAF (Stiver et al. 2015, BLM TR 6710-1, as revised; **Appendix 4**) utilizing current geographically applicable research on seasonal habitat requisites of GRSG (see **Appendix 4**). Updates to seasonal habitat indicators and ecological site descriptions (ESDs) will be developed locally and coordinated with partners (see **Appendix 4**).

Management Action SSS [Y2]: Maintain, improve, or restore the suitability of GRSG seasonal habitats using the Habitat Indicators Table (see **Appendix 4**) to inform measurable project objectives during implementation-level planning for BLM-permitted and BLM-initiated site-specific actions in HMAs, in coordination with applicable partners. Use the results of site-scale habitat assessments and other best available information to inform management decisions and the design and implementation of habitat projects.

Predation

Objective: Reduce predation from increased numbers of predators resulting from anthropogenic disturbance and habitat loss and function.
Allocation: N/A

Management Direction:
Management Action 1: Apply minimization measures and BMPs to new, existing, and renewal of authorizations and activities to minimize threats from predators shown to pose a threat to GRSG, consistent with applicable law. This includes, but is not limited to stopping, slowing, and/or discouraging the incursion of predators, increased levels of predators, or predators expanding into new areas. Minimization measures and BMPs include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Limit the footprint for all proposed projects to the smallest area necessary to achieve the project objectives in order to reduce habitat loss.
b. Place project components within existing disturbance areas whenever possible to minimize habitat loss.
c. Eliminate or minimize external food resources from anthropogenic sources (e.g., trash resources from human activities, road killed animals, carcass dumps).
d. Reduce or prevent opportunities for raven and raptor perching and nesting through such measures as nest/perch deterrents and regular maintenance.

Management Action 2: For authorizations that require expanded, new, renewal, or non-routine maintenance of energy, mining, or transmission related infrastructure projects as identified in **Table 3-4** (**Appendix 3**, Greater Sage-grouse Monitoring Framework in PHMA) the project proponent is required to submit a predator subsidy management plan (plan) to minimize influx and support of predators as a result of the project. Refer to the **Glossary** for the definition of "non-routine maintenance". The requirement to prepare a plan could be waived as a result of site-specific circumstances and with State

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Director concurrence. The plan shall be coordinated with state and federal agencies (e.g., USFWS and US Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)) as appropriate. The plan will: a) Outline how the project will be designed to minimize threats to GRSG beyond the natural range of variability from predators; b) Describes project design features to reduce or eliminate predator subsidies (e.g., reducing raven and raptor perching and nesting by burying powerlines, removing trash food subsidies, minimizing infrastructure, locating any necessary structures out of line of site of breeding and nesting habitat, using tubular non-branching material for structures); c) Describe and outline the coordination and concurrence with state and federal agencies, if appropriate (e.g., USFWS, APHIS, etc.). The project proponent may participate in non-lethal control of predators (e.g., removal of raven nests before eggs are present) with the written consent and permits from the appropriate agency and as determined at the site-specific analysis; d) Include a monitoring strategy to assess efficacy of the predator subsidy management plan and GRSG population response. **Management Action 3:** The BLM will collaborate with appropriate state agencies, other landowners, federal agencies (e.g., USFWS, APHIS), and Tribal governments, as appropriate and consistent with BLM policy, in their efforts to minimize impacts from predators on GRSG where impacts have been documented, including providing needed authorizations to support predator management actions.
Minerals
Objective: N/A **Allocation:** N/A **Management Direction**: Where the federal government owns the mineral estate in GRSG HMAs, and the surface is in nonfederal ownership, the federal government will apply the same stipulations, COAs, and/or conservation measures and mineral RDFs if the mineral estate is developed on BLM administered lands in that management area, to the maximum extent permissible under existing authorities, and in coordination with the landowner. Where the federal government owns the surface and the mineral estate is in non-federal ownership in GRSG HMAs, the federal government will apply appropriate surface use COAs, stipulations, and mineral RDFs through rights-of-way (ROW) grants or other surface management instruments, to the maximum extent permissible under existing authorities, in coordination with the mineral estate owner/lessee.
Coal
Objective: N/A **Allocation:** N/A **Management Direction**: Unless a suitability process has already been conducted that considered GRSG HMAs, at the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted to the BLM, the BLM will determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods pursuant to 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 3461.5. Coordination with the appropriate state agency and the determination of essential habitat for maintaining GRSG as per the suitability criteria at 43 CFR Part 3461.5(o)(1) will consider site-specific information associated with lease nomination areas as part of the unsuitability process.

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Livestock Grazing
Objective (RM-1): Manage livestock grazing in GRSG habitat in a manner that meets or makes progress toward meeting Land Health Standard (LHS) number five[11] in each of the four applicable Rangeland Health Standards and Grazing Guidelines for Montana/Dakotas BLM offices , and applies the guideline that addresses "restoring, maintaining, or enhancing habitats of...special status species to promote their conservation" (43 CFR Part 4180.2(e)(9) or subsequent changes to regulations or policy). **Allocation (RM-1)**: The presence of GRSG HMAs will not affect whether an area is available for livestock grazing. During livestock grazing authorization renewals, Allotment Management Plan (or its functional equivalent) development, or other appropriate implementation-level planning, BLM will follow all applicable livestock grazing regulations including 43 CFR Subpart 4120 – Grazing Management and 43 CFR 4180.2 Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration or any subsequent revisions, and the best management practices and design features in **Appendix 5**. **Management Direction** **RM-1**: During the land health assessment process, use the criteria identified in the Sage-Grouse HAF (BLM-TR-6710-1 - Stiver et al. 2015 – as revised) and other BLM-approved methodology to provide multiple lines of evidence (consistent with BLM Manual 1283) for determining whether vegetation structure, condition, and composition are meeting or making significant progress towards meeting LHS 5. This includes referencing appropriate ESD, associated State and Transition Model (STM), and existing ecological condition information. For GRSG, the standard would generally be met when vegetation conditions provide for suitable GRSG habitat at the HAF site-scale (refer to **Table 4-1, Appendix 4**), based on existing ecological condition, ecological potential, and existing vegetation information. Where LHS 5 (specific to GRSG habitat) is not being met – as indicated by an unsuitable site-scale HAF assessment relative to site potential – and current livestock grazing is a significant causal factor (43 CFR Part 4180, BLM H-4180-1 or subsequent changes to regulations or policy), adjustments to livestock grazing practices and activities will be made at the authorization, allotment or activity plan level and in accordance with applicable regulations (43 CFR Part 4180.2 or subsequent changes to regulations or policy). Any adjustments to livestock grazing will be made based on current ecological potential according to ESD, associated STM, and existing ecological state. **RM-2**: In PHMA, when fully processing livestock grazing authorizations where LHS 5 is not being met (specific to GRSG habitat), and current livestock grazing has been identified as a significant causal factor (43 CFR Part 4180, BLM H-4180-1 or subsequent changes to regulations or policy), the NEPA

[11] Montana/Dakotas has four sets of Land Health Standards and each of these includes a habitat standard as the fifth standard. The offices covered and specific standards include: 1) Butte, Dillon, and Missoula (STANDARD #5: Provide habitat as necessary, to maintain a viable and diverse population of native plant and animal species, including special status species.); 2) Dakotas (STANDARD #5: Habitats are maintained and/or restored, where appropriate, for healthy, productive and diverse populations of native plant and animal species); 3) Lewistown and the HiLine (STANDARD #5: Habitats are provided to maintain healthy, productive and diverse populations of native plant and animal species, including special status species - federally threatened, endangered, candidate or Montana species of special concern as defined in BLM Manual 6840, Special Status Species Management); and 4) Billings and Miles City (Habitats are provided for healthy, productive, and diverse native plant and animal populations and communities. Habitats are improved or maintained for special status species - federally threatened, endangered, candidate or Montana species of special concern). Collectively these are referred to as Montana/Dakotas Land Health Standard 5.

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analysis must include in at least one alternative with specific thresholds and defined responses that would be included in the terms and conditions of the livestock grazing authorization if that alternative were selected. One or more defined responses will allow the Authorized Officer to consider adjustments to livestock grazing during the term of the authorization that have already been analyzed in a NEPA document. Thresholds specific to GRSG habitat will be developed to make significant progress toward fulfillment of the LHS (43 CFR Part 4180.2 or subsequent changes to regulations or policy) and maintain or move PHMA toward providing suitable GRSG habitat (e.g., **Table 4-1, Appendix 4**). Thresholds and defined responses will be designed to address the HAF assessment that warranted the Land Health Evaluation finding, and consider ecological site potential, relevant locally specific conditions, and LHS. **RM-3**: During the livestock grazing authorization renewal process, evaluate all existing livestock management range improvements with respect to their effect on GRSG and GRSG habitat. Consider removal or modification of projects that negatively affect GRSG or GRSG habitat. Range improvements needed for management of sensitive species habitat or other sensitive resources should be maintained but consider implementing improvements in a manner less impactful to GRSG (Refer to **Appendix 5** for Livestock Grazing Management Best Management Practices and Design Features). **RM-4**: Range improvements are defined as any activity or program relating to rangelands which is designed to improve forage, change vegetative composition, control patterns of use, provide water, stabilize soil and water conditions and provide habitat for livestock and wildlife. Design new range improvement projects to enhance livestock distribution or management and to better control the duration, timing and intensity of grazing. They may include application of new technologies such as voluntary virtual fencing. In PHMA, any new structural range improvements should be placed along existing disturbance corridors or in the least suitable habitat, to the extent practicable, and are subject to appropriate design features (**Appendix 5**) and NEPA. **RM-5:** Identify fences in high-risk areas in coordination with the state wildlife agency or other appropriate state authority. Priority should be given to areas within 1.2 miles of a lek (Christiansen 2009; Stevens 2011) or other areas identified as important seasonal habitats or areas of GRSG concentration. Evaluate if the fence is needed and/or meets BLM wildlife friendly fencing standards (BLM H-1741). If the fence is unnecessary, remove it. If the fence is needed to support management, mark fences with high visibility fence markers in high risk or important areas (Christiansen 2009; Stevens 2011). Where marking fences does not reduce fence-related GRSG mortality, modify fences. Modification could include re-routing, altering construction materials, using seasonal drop fencing, or limiting perching of predators. New fences within high-risk areas will only be authorized if at least one of the following criteria is met: a) It is consistent with the overall RMP GRSG objective; **OR** b) Local terrain features shield nearby habitat or reduce the habitat importance; **OR** c) The fence is constructed with high visibility markers to reduce GRSG strikes. Evaluating existing fences to assess mortality risk is recommended in all GRSG habitats.
Vegetation
Objective: N/A **Allocation:** N/A **Management Direction:** • Remove conifers encroaching into sagebrush habitats in a manner that considers tribal and cultural value, as well as other key resources such as other special status species, including threatened and endangered species and soils. Prioritize treatments closest to occupied GRSG habitats and

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near leks, and where encroachment is phase 1 or phase 2. Use of site-specific analysis and tools will help refine the location for specific areas to be treated. • Restore, convert, or diversify areas with where crested wheatgrass is limiting habitat value. Prioritize treatments within occupied areas and near leks. Use of site-specific analysis and tools will be used to refine the location for specific areas to be treated. • Treatments that conserve, enhance, or restore GRSG habitat will be allowed, as will treatments that benefit other resources and do not adversely affect GRSG or their habitat.
Fire and Fuels
Objective: N/A **Allocation:** N/A **Management Direction:** If prescribed fire is used in GRSG habitat, the NEPA analysis for the Burn Plan will address: • why alternative techniques were not selected as viable options; • how GRSG goals and objectives will be met by its use; • how the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) Report objectives will be addressed and met; • a risk assessment to address how potential threats to GRSG habitat will be minimized Prescribed fire as vegetation or fuels treatment shall only be considered after the NEPA analysis for the Burn Plan has addressed the four bullets outlined above. Prescribed fire can be used to meet specific fuels objectives that will protect GRSG habitat in PHMA (e.g., creation of fuel breaks that will disrupt the fuel continuity across the landscape in stands where annual invasive grasses are a minor component in the understory, burning slash piles from conifer reduction treatments, used as a component with other treatment methods to combat annual grasses and restore native plant communities). Prescribed fire in known winter range shall only be considered after the NEPA analysis for the Burn Plan has addressed the four bullets outlined above. Any prescribed fire in winter habitat will need to be designed to strategically reduce wildfire risk around and/or in the winter range and designed to protect winter range habitat quality.
Wild Horse and Burro[1]
Objective: N/A **Allocation: N/A** **Management Direction:** **Management Action 1**: Where wild horses and burros overlap with GRSG: a. Manage wild horse and burro populations within established appropriate management levels (AML: see H-4700-1); **AND** b. Incorporate GRSG habitat objectives into wild horse and burro management (e.g., herd management area plans), monitoring, and gather prioritization, with prioritization of such activities in PHMA then GHMA; **AND** c. Prioritize gathers in GRSG PHMA unless removals are necessary in other areas to address higher priority issues, including herd health impacts.

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Management Action 2: Manage wild horse and burros herd management areas in GRSG habitat (or portions of the herd management area overlapping or within GRSG habitat) within the established AML ranges to achieve and maintain GRSG habitat objectives and achieve or make significant progress towards achieving LHS, considering the full suite of approaches to maintain AML, including temporary fertility control and non-reproducing, or partially non-reproducing herds. **Management Action 3**: If GRSG site-scale habitat objectives are not being met in PHMA and GHMA, evaluate AMLs and adjust, if necessary, through the NEPA process where wild horse or burro use is identified as significant causal factor to not meeting LHS, or is a factor in the area not meeting the GRSG habitat objectives. [1] In Montana/Dakotas, the revised GRSG HMAs in the approved plan and the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range overlap by just over 300 acres in the Billings Field Office, whereas no other offices have Wild Horse and Burro HMAs in Montana/Dakotas. In the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range GRSG and wild horse habitat use do not overlap due to physical barriers. However, to account for possible future overlap, the Wild Horse and Burro actions in this Approved RMP Amendment will apply to the Billings RMP but are not applicable to any other office.
Adaptive Management
Objective: Address unanticipated negative impacts to GRSG from changes in habitat conditions before consequences become severe or irreversible. **Allocation**: N/A **Management Action:** The BLM will implement adaptive management per the following management action to inform appropriate responses to the loss or degradation of GRSG habitat on BLM-administered lands. Where the state has an adaptive management process as part of the state's GRSG management plan, program, policy, regulation, or authority, the BLM will participate in and implement the most recent state adaptive management process, consistent with the framework outlined in **Appendix 10**. If a state is developing an adaptive management process, the BLM will participate in developing that process and, as appropriate, any state-level interagency adaptive management team. The BLM must consider the best available information about GRSG habitat and population status, which includes the states' data and other available science. States have ownership over managing GRSG populations and therefore lead the collection of GRSG population monitoring data and determination of population status (e.g., increasing, decreasing, or stable). The states' population monitoring is important for informing effective GRSG habitat management on BLM-administered lands. In coordination with state GRSG authorities and state-level interagency adaptive management teams, BLM will produce an annual summary of GRSG habitat conditions and population status, adaptive management thresholds, and any associated adaptive management responses and decisions for BLM-administered lands. This will be completed by a mutually agreed-upon date. BLM's annual summaries will include population status input and recommendations from state GRSG authorities. BLM will coordinate with state GRSG authorities regarding management decisions made in response to adaptive management thresholds and subsequent causal factor analyses and will make decisions for the management of BLM managed surface lands and mineral estate. If no adaptive management thresholds are identified during a given year, an annual review of habitat and population status by state-level interagency adaptive management teams (including state GRSG authorities) is nonetheless encouraged.

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Consistent with state GRSG adaptive management processes and FLPMA, the BLM will implement the GRSG adaptive management framework outlined in **Appendix 10** in coordination with state-level interagency adaptive management teams.[12]
Mitigation
Objective: Implement the mitigation framework, with an emphasis on avoiding and minimizing habitat loss and to achieve the minimum standard of no net habitat loss when authorizing actions that result GRSG habitat loss and degradation (refer to **Appendix 3**, Monitoring Framework for table of activities related to habitat loss and degradation). BLM will consider compensatory mitigation actions as proposed by state GRSG mitigation objectives from plans, applicable laws, program, or authority (e.g., the no net loss, net gain preferred mitigation standard in "Montana Mitigation System Policy Guidance Document For Greater Sage-Grouse," October 2018). **Allocation:** N/A **Management Direction:** **Management Action**: The BLM may create mitigation strategies at the state or other applicable geographies when warranted based on habitat condition or anticipated land uses. These strategies will consider mitigation measures and approaches, sites for mitigation, alternative mitigation standards, and other factors as appropriate (e.g., current mitigation policy). In all GRSG habitat management areas and consistent with valid existing rights and applicable law, BLM will apply the mitigation framework when authorizing internal and third-party actions resulting in GRSG habitat loss and degradation (including indirect impacts) to achieve the no net habitat loss objective. BLM will apply mitigation in accordance with current mitigation related policy and, as applicable, comply with the most recent state agency and/or state regulatory requirements expressed by state mitigation policies, regulations, and/or authorities. **Application of Mitigation Framework:** *Avoidance*: Avoiding impacts is defined by not taking an action or parts of an action, to the extent practicable. Impact avoidance in GRSG habitats is the priority since restoration of most sagebrush systems can take decades. While the avoidance component of the mitigation framework is reflected in many PHMA allocations, BLM may also determine on a case-by-case basis to avoid impacts by not issuing an authorization in areas open to development when the mitigation objective and framework cannot be achieved. *Minimization*: Where avoidance is not practicable, impacts can be minimized through managing the severity of a project impact at a specific location. If impacts to GRSG habitats cannot be avoided, minimization measures will be applied (e.g., minimizing the disturbance footprint, implementing lek buffers, and adding BMPs and RDFs). BLM can consider site-specific minimization measures beyond those listed in this plan through site-specific environmental review to meet the no net habitat loss objective. *Compensation*: Where avoidance or minimization will not fully offset a project's impacts, compensatory mitigation is required and will at minimum meet the requirements of the state wildlife agency or other appropriate state authority. Prior to identifying compensatory mitigation, BLM must document the

[12] The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires the BLM, to "resolv[e], to the extent practical, inconsistencies between Federal and non-Federal Government plans," and achieve consistency with State and local plans to the maximum extent that the BLM finds to be consistent with the laws governing public lands. 43 USC 1712(c)(9). See also 43 CFR 1610.3-1.

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avoidance and minimization measures and explain why they are not effective at eliminating all impacts (i.e., residual effects), as well as documenting how compensatory mitigation is an appropriate tool for the situation. In situations where impacts cannot be avoided or minimized to the mitigation objective, residual impacts will be compensated at a level and in a manner to fully offset both direct and indirect impacts from the project to habitat function. Offset approaches should comply with state agency or regulatory requirements, be consistent with BLM and DOI policy, and minimally achieve no net habitat loss. Compensatory mitigation efforts should consider key factors such as the nature of residual impacts (including indirect and direct impacts), and the types, attributes, amount, sites, and mechanisms of the compensatory mitigation. Compensatory mitigation should result in restoration of functional habitats or enhancement of habitats such that the habitat can support the number of GRSG present prior to the disturbance at the apex of the population cycle. The metrics identified in the HAF, or equivalent GRSG assessment approach, should be used to determine if restoration actions provide or enhance GRSG habitat. Where restoration is not possible efforts such as conservation easements can be used to offset impacts and should be designed to protect uniquely important habitats (e.g., limiting winter habitats, connectivity corridors) or areas of GRSG habitats that are at a high risk of conversion. Mitigation should be prioritized to benefit the same or adjacent habitat areas affected by the project. For example, first the local population, such as the neighborhood cluster, then if not possible the same HAF fine-scale area (Stiver et al., 2015, as revised), and in the nearest equivalent HMA (e.g., PHMA, GHMA). The compensation project must be planned and approved by the operator, BLM, and surface owner in coordination with the appropriate state agency prior to construction, surface occupancy, or surface disturbing activities. It is preferred that compensatory mitigation be completed prior to initiating the activity causing the need for compensation and monitored for retention and efficacy unless inconsistent with state law. Compensatory mitigation shall be durable and resilient, ensuring GRSG habitat will persist barring any natural disaster. The project proponent will be responsible for ensuring the durability and success of any compensatory mitigation associated with their project. Compensatory mitigation will not be required for activities implemented to conserve species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act or a species within five years of delisting. Compensatory mitigation is not required by the BLM for operations conducted under the Mining Law of 1872, but operators may always voluntarily engage in compensatory mitigation. Minimization actions and compensation should be discussed with project proponents/operators and incorporated into alternatives when appropriate. Compensation may also be required by state regulations. Refer to **Appendix 3**, Greater Sage-grouse Monitoring Framework, Measure 5, for compensatory mitigation tracking requirements.

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Objective/Allocation/Management Direction

Criteria Based Management for Non-Habitat

Objective: N/A

Allocation: No allocation identified but allocations can be affected if non-habitat criteria are met.

Management Direction (can affect HMA allocation and management direction, see Tables above):

Habitat management areas include areas where the BLM will apply goals, objectives, and management actions for conservation of GRSG. The HMAs are identified using inventory data on habitat use and occupancy and reflect the dynamic nature of the vegetation communities that make-up GRSG habitat. The HMA boundaries are not identified using survey-grade assessments (e.g., comprehensive on-the-ground surveys and edge verifications) and, in some states, are the result of large-scale modeling. Therefore, not every acre within an HMA boundary may be GRSG habitat. Additionally, because GRSG habitat use and occupancy and vegetation communities are dynamic, the BLM will use up-to-date high-quality information, including field investigations, to make adjustments to the management actions to be applied within identified HMA boundaries. In accordance with existing law, regulation and policy, inventories will continue to be conducted to provide information on GRSG habitat and distribution (BLM Manual 6840).

Non-habitat consists of areas that lack the ecological potential to provide principal habitat components necessary to support GRSG. In the mapped GRSG HMAs, there may be areas of non-habitat where conformance with the RMP will not support GRSG conservation. Refer to definitions for existing habitat, potential habitat, and non-habitat in **Appendix 7**, Glossary. If during consideration of a project level authorization within GRSG PHMA, GHMA, or Unique HMAs potential non-habitat is identified by the BLM, a project-specific review should be conducted by a wildlife biologist or reviewed and accepted for confirmation by the BLM. This review should use published, scientific methods (preferably more than one) for identifying GRSG habitat (e.g., Stiver et al. 2015 [as revised], ESDs and associated STMs) and be coordinated with the appropriate state agencies. Any discrepancies between the mapped GRSG HMAs and the site-specific conditions will be disclosed, with supporting data (e.g., vegetation monitoring, STMs, ESDs) and analyzed as a component of the NEPA process. However, indirect and direct impacts to adjacent GRSG populations and their habitats, including potential habitat, still need to be considered when planning and authorizing projects in these non-habitat areas.

All management objectives and decisions associated with each management area type will apply unless all the following criteria are documented:

1. Project is proposed in verified non-habitat.
2. There are no indirect impacts to adjacent habitat or individual or populations of GRSG occupying these adjacent areas due to project design and required design features (e.g., minimize noise, preclude tall structures, require perch deterrents), as demonstrated in the project's NEPA document. Indirect impact consideration includes the following:
    (1) The project does not impact connectivity:
        i. Within or between populations; or
        ii. Between seasonal habitats (e.g., nesting, early brood rearing, winter); or
        iii. Within or between existing habitat.
3. Any project-related access through/across GRSG habitat (as verified through site-specific field checks) only occurs on existing routes, and the proposed action will not include new roads or upgrades to roads that will change the vehicle use, vehicle type, or traffic volume during the applicable season of GRSG use, subject to valid existing rights, throughout all stages of the proposed project.

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4. Coordination with the appropriate state and federal agency biologists and other appropriate staff has been documented. If coordination is not possible the reasons will be documented. All proposed actions, including those in the same area, will need to undergo individual analysis to confirm the criteria are met prior to authorization. Exempting a proposed project from the management actions that will otherwise be required in a GRSG habitat management area identified on the maps in this RMP Amendment because the proposal has been determined to be in non-habitat, based on the above criteria, will not change the GRSG habitat management area boundaries as identified in the RMP. The determination to exempt a proposed project from the management actions that will otherwise be required in the GRSG habitat management area identified in maps in this RMP Amendment, when supported by science and consistent with the criteria above, may only be made by the Authorized Officer. However, if there is not concurrence between the coordinating federal and/or state wildlife biologists, then the determination will be at the discretion of the BLM State Director.
Definition of Lek
Objective: N/A **Allocation:** N/A **Management Direction:** Use the WAFWA lek definitions (Cook et al. 2022). (Refer to **Appendix 7**, Glossary). Unless otherwise specifically noted, when language in the RMPs uses the term "lek" it applies to the WAFWA definition for "active lek."
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Fire and Invasives Assessment Tool (FIAT): MDs including SSS MD 5, 6, 37; VEG Objective 2, VEG MD 2, 8, and 9; and MD FIRE 3, 5, 7, 9-13, 20, 21, 32, and 33 are removed or modified to clarify the FIAT does not apply to SW Montana. Key Habitat References: MDs including SSS MD 8, 9, 13, 16-18, 29, 30, 41, and 42 are removed to eliminate key habitat management actions for Dillon (key habitat is an Idaho-specific process). Wild Horse and Burro Section is removed to clarify these only apply to wild horses and burros in Idaho, as there are no wild horses and burros HMAs in Dillon.

Table 2. Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) Allocations and Management Direction

This table identifies the allocations and management direction and that will be applied in PHMA. The table describes if the Approved RMP Amendment is amending the "objective", "allocation", or "management direction" for the resource topic identified. In some instances, the Approved RMP Amendment addresses all three of these planning categories for a resource topic while in other resource topics only one or two of the categories are amended. All three planning categories are identified for each resource topic and if it is not being amended it will be identified as "N/A", not applicable. In those "N/A" instances, the existing decision is not being proposed for amendment and remains in place. In addition, for all three planning categories identified for each resource topic, there may be instances where the decision is already contained in a Resource Management Plan. However, for consistency and continuity across the nine RMPs being amended, they are identified below. The existing RMP decisions are described in **Appendix 2**.

Maps that show where the allocations and management direction apply can be found in **Appendix 1**, Table and Maps.

Approved RMP Amendment for PHMA Objective/Allocation/Management Direction
Fluid Minerals (including geothermal)
Objective: Manage fluid mineral leasing and development in GRSG habitat management areas to avoid when practicable, then minimize, and compensate for adverse impacts to GRSG habitat to the extent practical required under the law and BLM jurisdiction. **Allocations for Unleased Lands:** Open to leasing subject to no surface occupancy (NSO), controlled surface use (CSU), and timing limitations (TL). Prior to granting any Waiver, Exception, or Modification to GRSG based stipulations, the BLM will coordinate with the appropriate state authority for GRSG habitats and populations. Refer to **Appendix 6** for stipulations. Refer to **Appendix 3**, Greater Sage-grouse Monitoring Framework, Measure 6 for Waiver, Exception, and Modification tracking requirements. **Management Direction for Unleased Lands:** **Management Action:** Geophysical exploration is allowed in unleased areas provided the work can be accomplished without road construction, avoids surface disturbing or disruptive activities, and the project is in accordance with seasonal timing and other restrictions that may apply**.** **Development in Areas Already Leased:** When considering exploration and development on areas leased for fluid mineral resources in PHMAs application of measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate potential impacts will be considered through completion of the requirements at 43 CFR Part 3162.5 (Environmental Review) and 36 CFR Part 228.108 (Surface Use Requirements). Such measures may include existing lease stipulations, project design, operator-committed measures, RMP RDFs, and local COAs. The BLM will work with project proponents and the appropriate state authority to promote effective management and connectivity of seasonal habitats and PHMAs to accomplish measurable GRSG conservation objectives. Surface use rights associated with existing leases will be recognized and respected. For proposed operations in PHMA, the Surface Use Plan of Operations (refer to 43 CFR Part 3162.3-1(f)) shall address, at a minimum, the applicable RDFs in the RMP. RMP-defined project features reducing GRSG impacts not utilized in the Surface Use Plan of Operations based on site-specific or project-specific considerations shall be noted in the project file, along with a rationale for not including them. The BLM will evaluate whether each conservation measure is reasonable and consistent with surface use rights as part of the environmental review process (see 43 CFR Part 3101.12).

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Saleable Minerals/Mineral Materials
Objective: N/A **Allocation**: Closed to new large-scale mineral material sales. Open to consideration of small-scale disposal actions (e.g., less than 20 cubic yards), free use permits, and expansion of existing pits (see also Criteria Based Management for Non-Habitat). Projects must be within 0.25 miles of an existing improved road, farther than 0.6 miles from leks, be less than 40 acres of surface disturbance, and meet the criteria below: 1) The proposed project adheres to GRSG seasonal timing restrictions. Exceptions to timing limitations may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Authorized Officer and granted based on review and documenting adherence to one of the following criteria: a. The geographic and temporal conditions demonstrate that topography or other factors eliminate impacts to GRSG, or local variations indicate seasonal life cycle periods are different than the defined breeding and winter use periods. b. The project is needed to address immediate public health and safety concerns in a timely manner. 2) Analysis documents the project meets the limitations to surface disturbing and disruptive activities (e.g., assessment of lek buffers, noise limitations, reclamation, disturbance caps). **Management Direction:** N/A
Nonenergy Leasable Minerals
Objective: N/A **Allocation**: Closed to new leases but *allows expansion of existing operations.* **Management Direction**: Apply RDFs, BMPs, and minimization measures identified in the existing GRSG RMPs (refer to **Appendix 2**).
Locatable Minerals
Objective: N/A **Allocation:** Open, unless currently withdrawn. **Management Direction**: N/A
Rights-of-Way
Objective: N/A **Allocation:** Exclusion: • Surface disturbing or disruptive activities within: – 0.6 miles of leks – Crucial winter range Avoidance • In existing corridors or ROWs, or co-location within existing disturbed/converted areas • In the rest of PHMA

Management Direction:
Major ROWs are linear features such as overhead transmission lines, distribution pipelines, and large non-linear surface disturbing projects; refer to **Appendix 7**, Glossary.

If during consideration of a proposed project-level authorization for a ROW action, the determination of whether it is a major or minor ROW is questioned with supporting rationale, the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the State Office lead(s), will make the final determination.

Major Rights-of-Way Avoidance Criteria in PHMA:
Authorizations for major ROWs may be granted for projects that are neutral or beneficial to GRSG. Applications and the environmental analysis must clearly demonstrate to the Authorized Officer, in consultation with BLM State Office lead(s), that at least one of the criteria below and the additional conditions are met.

1) The project is neutral or beneficial to GRSG habitat through the application of avoidance and minimization measures, including co-location, described in the mitigation framework ; **OR**
2) The ROW can be routed through, or located within, non-habitat as defined by the Criteria Based Management for Non-Habitat (refer to **Table 1**).
3) The ROW must be the minimum necessary to achieve the ROW's purpose and will not otherwise be feasible in an area that is "open" to ROWs (including co-location with existing corridors and ROWs). Analysis must also justify placement in areas within lek buffer distances (e.g., Manier et al. 2014) and that no reasonable alternatives exist for co-location with existing compatible ROWs in the HMA or placement of facilities outside the HMA avoidance area; **OR**
4) The proposed location on federal lands will be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby non-federal lands parcel and development on the public parcel in question will eliminate impacts on more important and/or limited GRSG habitat (e.g., wet meadows, brood-rearing habitat) on the nearby non-federal parcel. The ROW must be the minimum necessary to achieve the ROW's purpose.

If one or multiple of the avoidance criteria can be met, the ROW must also meet the following conditions in order to be permitted in PHMA:

a. Micro-siting while developing the major ROW is required to limit impacts and maintain connectivity corridors between seasonal habitats. This includes using topography and non-habitat as an effective barrier to adverse impacts and co-location with existing and similarly sized infrastructure; **AND**
b. Development of the major ROW includes applicable measures and additional required GRSG management (e.g., disturbance cap, mitigation framework, RDFs)

Minor Rights-of-Way Avoidance Criteria in PHMA
Authorizations for minor ROWs may be granted for projects that are neutral or beneficial to GRSG. Applications and the environmental analysis must clearly demonstrate to the Authorized Officer that the avoidance measure has been met. Projects may reach this measure if at least one of the criteria below are met and development of the ROW includes applicable measures and additional required GRSG management (e.g., disturbance cap, predation, mitigation framework, RDFs):

1) The project is neutral or beneficial to GRSG habitat through application of avoidance and minimization measures, including co-location, described in the mitigation framework.
2) The project can be co-located with an existing ROW and the new disturbance results in minimal impacts to those already associated with the existing infrastructure, including indirect disturbance to or disruption of adjacent seasonal habitats.
3) The ROW can be routed through, or located within, non-habitat as defined by the Criteria Based Management for Non-Habitat management direction (refer to **Table 1**).
4) The ROW can be routed through, or located within, non-habitat or unsuitable habitat. Unsuitable habitat will be determined by a wildlife biologist and confirmed by the BLM using criteria such as the HAF and coordinated with state wildlife agencies and other appropriate state authority. ROWs

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shall minimize disruption of connectivity between habitat areas and should be designed to prevent indirect disturbance to or disruption of adjacent seasonal habitats as disclosed in the environmental analysis. 5) The ROW will not otherwise be feasible in an area that is "open" to ROWs, including existing corridors or ROWs, and in areas outside lek buffer distances (e.g., Manier et al. 2014). 6) Environmental analysis demonstrates the proposed location on public lands will be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel (e.g., due to landownership patterns), and development on the public parcel in question will be less impactful on GRSG habitat.
Disturbance Cap
Objective: N/A **Allocation**: N/A **Management Direction**: If direct habitat disturbance exceeds either: 1) 3% anthropogenic disturbance from existing and proposed infrastructure developments at the project scale (refer to description below), or 2) 5% at the project scale, including existing and proposed anthropogenic infrastructure, fire and, agriculture. Disturbances and calculation approach will utilize the approach of the Montana GRSG Habitat Conservation Program Disturbance Density Calculation Tool (DDCT) (i.e., wildfire and agricultural, and infrastructure such as subdivisions and urban included in the numerator). 3) 3% anthropogenic disturbance from existing and proposed infrastructure developments at the HAF fine-scale habitat selection area (refer to description below). New infrastructure projects will be deferred to the extent allowable under applicable laws, or valid existing rights: a. until such time as the percentage of habitat disturbance in the areas has been reduced below the cap threshold through restoration of existing disturbance to meeting habitat objectives or increasing the amount of suitable habitat through restoration, or b. redesigned to not result in additional surface disturbance (co-location), redesigned to move it outside of habitat in PHMA (refer to non-habitat criteria), or redesigned to move it outside PHMA. **Disturbance Cap Calculation (3% Project and Fine-Scale)** <u>Numerator</u> The disturbance cap calculation is limited to the following specific activities, whether existing projects or new proposals (refer to **Appendix 3** for additional details on how these items will be monitored): • Oil and gas wells and development facilities • Coal mines • Wind developments (e.g., towers, sub-stations) • Solar fields • Geothermal development facilities • Mining (active locatable, nonenergy leasable and saleable/mineral material developments) • Roads defined as transportation features with a maintenance intensity of level 3 or 5 (BLM Technical Note 422 – Roads and Trails Terminology, 2006 or as updated). This does not include two-tracks. • Railroads

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- Power lines
- Communication towers
- Other vertical infrastructure, as well as developed rights-of-way with habitat loss (e.g., pipelines)

In addition to the specific activities listed above, the following additional activities will be incorporated into the numerator at the project scale:

- Coal bed methane ponds
- Meteorological towers (e.g., wind energy testing)
- Nuclear energy facilities
- Airport facilities and infrastructure
- Hydroelectric plants/facilities
- Additional energy, mining, and infrastructure disturbances (e.g., subdivisions) to provide consistency with state approaches (i.e., the DDCT run by the Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Program).

Where such data are available, this disturbance is measured by the footprint of direct disturbance of the PHMA area where habitat is removed, including staging areas, dispersed structures, parking lots, and equipment storage areas; or by the distance between the outermost lines for transmission lines. A disturbed area is included in the numerator until it has been restored to provide equal or improved habitat function as was provided by the area before the disturbance. When considering new project proposals, any project associated with the above list that has been approved/authorized but not yet constructed should be treated as though it were already constructed when calculating the disturbance cap to account for authorized but not yet constructed disturbance. BLM will coordinate with state agencies and use available HAF and land health data to determine if the habitat function of an area has been restored.

Consistent with the BLM's responsibility to consider cumulative impacts when making decisions for activities on public lands, the disturbance percentage includes acres from the above disturbances regardless of landownership, where such data are available. This will only inform decision-making on public lands and cannot impact private property rights.

Wildfire and agriculture will not be included in the numerator at the HAF fine-scale.

Denominator

At the project scale, the assessment area (denominator) is determined by identifying the extent of the GRSG PHMA that supports the GRSG population that is potentially affected by the proposed project and is also located in PHMA; it is not limited to the area where indirect impacts are anticipated. The project scale denominator should include the PHMA used by the potentially affected local GRSG population, including the associated seasonal habitats and the transition zones between those habitats within PHMA associated with the project location.

If monitoring data are insufficient to identify the portions of the PHMA used by the potentially affected local GRSG population, identify project level boundaries using an approach similar to the DDCT approach developed by the State of Wyoming: 1) Determine potentially affected leks by placing a 4-mile buffer around the proposed area of physical disturbance related to the proposed project. All leks located within the 4-mile project buffer and within PHMA will be considered affected by the project. 2) Place a 4-mile buffer around each of the affected leks. All PHMA within the 4-mile project buffer, combined with the 4-mile lek buffer(s), creates the project analysis area for each individual project, absent other monitoring data. If there are no leks within the 4-mile project buffer, the project scale analysis area will be that portion of the 4-mile project buffer within PHMA. "Pending leks" and other similarly defined state-based lek categories can be considered as "WAFWA active" leks based on inclusion from the state wildlife agency or appropriate state authority.

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At the HAF fine-scale, the assessment area (denominator) is the acres of PHMA within the boundaries of the HAF fine-scale habitat delineation area. Calculation of the 3% cap will include all acres of PHMA in the fine-scale area as the denominator. At either scale, all areas in PHMA would be included in the denominator unless specific information documents areas of non-habitat or unsuitable habitat (e.g., assessment process described in the Criteria Based Management for Non-habitat section, seasonal habitat maps for the HAF fine-scale assessment area, areas that are unsuitable for all seasonal habitats using HAF site-scale techniques). These areas are treated neither as habitat nor disturbance, which results in the area being removed from the denominator piece of the formula. The denominator includes all lands regardless of land ownership to help the BLM consider the cumulative impacts of disturbances on GRSG when considering projects on public lands. **Disturbance Cap Exceptions** For project level analyses where the anthropogenic disturbance does not exceed the 3% cap, but the inclusion of fire and agriculture causes the disturbance to exceed 5%, the BLM may consider an exception. Exceptions are allowed if analysis demonstrates the proposed activities will not cause declines in GRSG populations in the applicable PHMA (e.g., considering the project analysis area, neighborhood clusters, and fine-scale HAF). Prior to granting the exception the Authorized Officer must provide an opportunity for input from the state wildlife agency (and other state authorities as legally required) and the USFWS and any other federal entities connected to the project, consider the distribution and extent of fire and agriculture surrounding the project, and justify how allowing an exception for the project meets the goals and objectives for GRSG management. In Montana, proposals to utilize an exception from the 5% disturbance cap will consider analysis by the Montana Habitat Conservation Program (with any additional feedback provided by MSGOT review). For projects that exceed the 3% cap at the project- or fine-scale the Authorized Officer may consider projects on federal lands that could result in exceeding the disturbance cap across all ownership at the **project scale** only if the project meets the criteria for one of the following categories of exceptions and meets the following conditions applicable to that exception: **Categories** for **Disturbance Cap Exceptions:** a. If the disturbance is associated with the renewal or re-authorization of existing infrastructure in previously disturbed sites or expansions of existing infrastructure that do not result in new direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on GRSG and its habitat, and is documented. b. If a technical team evaluates and concludes site-specific GRSG habitat and population information, combined with project design elements including compensatory mitigation, indicates the proposed project is expected to improve the condition of GRSG habitat within the proposed project analysis area. The technical team should consist of, at a minimum, a BLM field office biologist and a biologist from the appropriate state agency. The methods, rationale, and data used in developing recommendations shall be retained as part of the project record. c. If the disturbance is within an RMP designated utility corridor, the disturbance cap may be exceeded if site specific NEPA analysis indicates doing so will decrease impacts to GRSG habitat in comparison to siting a project outside the designated corridor. This exception is limited to projects that fulfill the use for which the corridors were designated (e.g., transmission lines, pipelines) and the designated width of a corridor will not be exceeded as a result of any project co-location. The disturbance cap cannot exceed 3% at the HAF fine-scale. For the development of new corridors, a plan amendment will be required that will need to appropriately address any potential changes in the disturbance cap. d. If the environmental review document(s) explains how the GRSG RMP goals and objectives will be met, including avoidance first (e.g., locating the proposed projects outside PHMA, co-location within footprint of existing disturbance), then minimization (e.g., application of RDFs), with appropriate

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documentation. The environmental review document must also consider the cumulative effects of other exceptions granted in adjacent project scale units. If avoidance is not possible and minimization does not address all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, compensatory mitigation can be considered in coordination with the appropriate state agency. **If one or more of the exception criteria can be met, the activity associated with the disturbance must also meet all of the following conditions in order to be permitted:** a. If the exception relies on compensatory mitigation: 1. the mitigation must be completed prior to the disturbance that results in the exceedance of the disturbance cap and provide the same or better value habitat based on site limitations, or better based on site limitations; **AND** 2. The compensation must be implemented in the same HAF fine-scale unit as the potential development. Consideration may be given to providing compensatory mitigation in adjacent fine-scale HAF areas if doing so will more effectively provide the offsetting benefit. b. All disturbance cap exceptions MUST have concurrence from the State Director. c. If proposed disturbance cap exception is requested in an area that has met one of the adaptive management thresholds, no exceptions to the disturbance cap at the project scale will be considered until the causal factor analysis is completed and the cause identified and corrected unless the disturbance is needed for the protection of human life and safety, as concurred by the State Director. d. Disturbance cap exceptions (either Project or HAF fine scale) will be tracked and considered in analyses for any proposed development in an appropriate biological area. All requests for the use of compensatory mitigation to exceed the disturbance cap should be reviewed by the technical team for likelihood of success and efficacy of offsetting impacts to the affected habitats and associated populations. e. There will be no exceptions to the 3% PHMA disturbance cap at the **HAF fine-scale** in any state unless: i. The disturbance is needed for the protection of human life and safety, as concurred by the State Director. f. In the event of a conflict between the project scale and HAF fine-scale disturbance caps, the Authorized Officer may consider and grant an exception to the disturbance cap at the HAF fine-scale if, in coordination with the appropriate State agency, it is determined that the impact to GRSG of the habitat disturbance resulting in the disturbance cap being met is better assessed at the project scale. g. Apply the disturbance cap to the extent consistent with applicable law, such as the Mining Law of 1872, and valid existing rights.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
No ACECs are proposed for designation.
Vegetation
In addition to "All HMA" Vegetation Direction in Table 1: **Objective:** **VEG OBJ-X:** The desired condition is to maintain all lands ecologically capable of producing sagebrush (but no less than 70%) with a minimum of 15% sagebrush canopy cover or as consistent with specific ecological site conditions. The attributes necessary to sustain these habitats are described in Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (BLM Tech Ref 1734-6). **VEG OBJ-Y:** Make re-establishment of sagebrush cover and desirable understory plants relative to the ecological site potential a high priority for restoration efforts in PHMA. Prioritize areas for conifer removal to benefit GRSG habitat.

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Utility Scale Solar
Utility scale solar projects are projects with nameplate capacity (theoretical output registered with authorities) of 5 megawatt (MW) or higher that deliver electricity to the electricity transmission grid (refer to **Appendix 7**, Glossary). **Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Utility scale solar testing and development is excluded from all PHMA; development as ancillary support for other approved uses (e.g., mineral developments, data centers) could occur if one of the exceptions can be met. **Management Direction:** **Exception Criteria** Apply Exception Criteria as defined in the PHMA NSO Fluid Mineral Stipulation (see Appendix 6)s
Utility Scale Wind
Utility-scale wind projects are projects larger than 1 MW that deliver electricity to the electricity transmission grid (refer to **Appendix 7**, Glossary). **Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Exclusion for utility scale wind testing and development (including met towers). **Management Direction:** **None**

Table 3. General Habitat Management Area (GHMA) Allocations and Management Direction

This table identifies the allocations and management direction and that will be applied in GHMA. The table describes if the Approved RMP Amendment is amending the "objective", "allocation", or "management direction" for the resource topic identified. In some instances, the Approved RMP Amendment addresses all three of these planning categories for a resource topic while in other resource topics only one or two of the categories are amended. All three planning categories are identified for each resource topic and if it is not being amended it will be identified as "N/A", not applicable. In those "N/A" instances, the existing decision is not being proposed for amendment and remains in place. In addition, for all three planning categories identified for each resource topic, there may be instances where the decision is already contained in a Resource Management Plan. However, for consistency and continuity across the nine RMPs being amended, they are identified below. The existing RMP decisions are described in **Appendix 2**.

Maps that show where the allocations and management direction apply can be found in **Appendix 1**, Table and Maps.

Approved RMP Amendment for GHMA	
Resource Topic	**Allocation and Management Direction**
Fluid Minerals (including Geothermal)	**Objective:** Same as PHMA (Table 2) **Allocations for Unleased Lands**: NSO • Within 0.6 miles of leks • Crucial winter range CSU • Remainder of GHMA **Management Direction:** Refer to **Appendix 6**: Montana/Dakotas Oil and Gas Stipulations on Unleased Lands for full list of stipulations.
Saleable Minerals/Mineral Materials	**Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Open. **Management Direction:** Apply avoidance and minimization measures to meet GRSG goals and objectives such as BMPs and RDFs identified in the existing Resource Management Plans (refer to **Appendix 2**) and coordinated with the applicable state authority.
Nonenergy Leasable Minerals	**Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Open. **Management Direction:** Apply avoidance and minimization measures to meet GRSG goals and objectives such as BMPs and RDFs identified in the existing Resource Management Plans (refer to **Appendix 2**) and coordinated with the applicable state authority.
Coal	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Locatable Minerals	**Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Open, unless currently withdrawn. **Management Direction:** N/A

Approved RMP Amendment for GHMA	
Resource Topic	**Allocation and Management Direction**
Rights-of-Way	**Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Avoidance – Within 1.2 miles of leks – Crucial winter range • Open, subject to GRSG LUP objectives – >1.2 miles from leks • Corridors – Utilizing designated/existing corridors is preferable, especially when meeting the collocation desire for activity/disturbance in GRSG habitat. **Rights-of-Way Avoidance Criteria** Authorizations for ROWs may be granted for projects that are neutral or beneficial to GRSG. Applications and the environmental analysis must clearly demonstrate to the Authorized Officer that the avoidance measure has been met. Projects may reach this measure if at least one of the criteria below are met and development of the ROW includes applicable measures and additional GRSG management (e.g., predation, mitigation framework, RDFs): 1) The project is neutral or beneficial to GRSG habitat through application of avoidance and minimization measures (including co-location) described in the mitigation framework. 2) The project can be co-located with an existing ROW and the new disturbance results in minimal impacts to those already associated with the existing infrastructure, including indirect disturbance to or disruption of adjacent seasonal habitats. 3) The ROW can be routed through or located within non-habitat, per the Criteria Based Management for Non-Habitat (refer to management direction in **Table 1**). 4) The ROW can be routed through or located within non-habitat or unsuitable habitat. Unsuitable habitat will be determined by a wildlife biologist and confirmed by the BLM using criteria such as the HAF and coordinated with state wildlife agencies and other appropriate state authority. ROWs shall minimize disruption of connectivity between habitat areas and should be designed to prevent indirect disturbance to or disruption of adjacent seasonal habitats as disclosed in the environmental analysis. 5) The ROW will not otherwise be feasible in an area that is "open" to ROWs, including existing corridors or ROWs, and in areas outside lek buffer distances (e.g., Manier et al. 2014).
Rights-of-Way *(continued)*	6) Environmental analysis demonstrates the proposed location on public lands will be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel (e.g., due to landownership patterns), and development on the public parcel in question will be less impactful on GRSG habitat. **Management Direction:** N/A
Livestock Grazing	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**) except RM-2 does not apply

Approved RMP Amendment for GHMA	
Resource Topic	**Allocation and Management Direction**
Wild Horse and Burro	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Mitigation	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Predation	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**) except Management Action 2 does not apply
Disturbance Cap	No GHMA disturbance cap management direction.
Adaptive Management	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Lek Definitions	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Criteria Based Management Direction for Non-Habitat	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Special Status Species Greater Sage-Grouse	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**) (both GRSG and Surface Disturbing Activities)
Fire and Fuels	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Vegetation	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Utility Scale Solar	**Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Exclusion w/in 2.0 miles of leks, and crucial winter habitat. Avoidance in rest of GHMA (see ROW section for avoidance criteria). **Management Direction:** N/A
Utility Scale Wind	**Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Exclusion w/in 2.0 miles of leks, and crucial winter habitat. Avoidance in rest of GHMA (see ROW section for avoidance criteria). **Management Direction:** N/A

Table 4. Unique HMA Allocations and Management Direction

This table identifies the allocations and management direction and that will be applied in the Unique HMAs: Little Missouri HMA (LMHMA), South Carter HMA (SCHMA), and Connectivity HMA (CHMA). The table describes if the Approved RMP Amendment is amending the "objective", "allocation", or "management direction" for the resource topic identified. In some instances, the Approved RMP Amendment addresses all three of these planning categories for a resource topic while in other resource topics only one or two of the categories are amended. All three planning categories are identified for each resource topic and if it is not being amended it will be identified as "N/A", not applicable. The existing RMP decisions are described in **Appendix 2**.

Maps that show where the allocations and management direction apply can be found in **Appendix 1**, Table and Maps.

Approved RMP Amendment for Unique Habitat Management Areas: Little Missouri, South Carter, and Connectivity HMAs	
Resource Topic	**Allocation and Management Direction**
Special Status Species Greater Sage-Grouse	**The "All HMA Special Status Species Section" (Table 1) applies, including Surface Disturbing Activities in GRSG Habitat. The following additional goal also applies to UHMAs:** **Goal:** Maintain sagebrush communities while taking strategic opportunities to expand GRSG habitat through habitat treatment and reclamation actions that remove the primary threats found on BLM managed surface acres (e.g., conifer encroachment, infrastructure) to allow for longer-term GRSG habitat enhancement.
LMHMA and SCHMA Objectives and Management	**Objective 1:** Develop and implement an area-wide habitat management plan. The plan will identify opportunities, including short term actions that can reduce disturbance and threats to GRSG (conifer encroachment, duplicative roads, infrastructure removal, etc.), habitat treatments (areas to increase sagebrush cover and understory plants), and longer-term actions to put in place as development is completed. **Objective 2:** Manage for no net loss of sagebrush habitat and maintain connectivity, subject to valid existing rights. **Objective 3:** Strategically target treatments with partners across jurisdictions in disturbed landscapes in a manner which increases or improves the quality and quantity of GRSG habitat. **MA SSS (LMHMA in North Dakota)**: Develop a Memorandum of Understanding and/or restoration plan between interested partners such as the Forest Service, State of North Dakota, USFWS, NRCS, and other conservation partners and adjacent states (Montana, South Dakota) to establish a cooperative approach regarding implementation of GRSG conservation measures, proposed management changes, mitigation, site-specific monitoring, adaptive management, and addressing threats to GRSG. The Memorandum of Understanding/plan will identify responsibilities, roles and interaction to maximize the party's individual conservation efforts.
CHMA Objectives	**Objective 1**: Maintain connectivity (e.g. stopover sites) and manage to facilitate the movement of GRSG, particularly between silver sagebrush and big sagebrush habitats. **Objective 2:** Strategically target treatments, as possible with partners across jurisdictions, in disturbed landscapes in a manner which increases or improves the quality and quantity of GRSG habitat.

Approved RMP Amendment for Unique Habitat Management Areas: Little Missouri, South Carter, and Connectivity HMAs	
Resource Topic	**Allocation and Management Direction**
Fluid Minerals (including Geothermal)	LMHMA in MT: **Objective:** Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) **Allocation for Unleased Lands:** Open to leasing subject to CSU and TL. Prior to granting any Waiver, Exception, or Modification to GRSG based stipulations, the BLM will coordinate with the appropriate state authority for GRSG habitats and populations. Refer to **Appendix 6** for stipulations. Refer to **Appendix 3**, Greater Sage-grouse Monitoring Framework, Measure 6 for Waiver, Exception, and Modification tracking requirements. **Management Direction:** Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) LMHMA (North Dakota) and SCHMA: Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) CHMA: **Objective:** Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) **Allocation for Unleased Lands:** Open to leasing subject to CSU and TL. Prior to granting any Waiver, Exception, or Modification to GRSG based stipulations, the BLM will coordinate with the appropriate state authority for GRSG habitats and populations. **Management Direction:** Refer to **Appendix 6** for stipulations. Refer to **Appendix 3**, Greater Sage-grouse Monitoring Framework, Measure 6 for Waiver, Exception, and Modification tracking requirements.
Saleable Minerals/Mineral Materials	LMHMA and SCHMA: Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) CHMA: Same as GHMA (**Table 3**)
Nonenergy Leasable Minerals	LMHMA and SCHMA: Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) CHMA: Same as GHMA (**Table 3**)
Coal	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Locatable Minerals	**Objective:** N/A **Allocation:** Open, unless currently withdrawn. **Management Direction:** N/A
Rights-of-Way	LMHMA and SCHMA: Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) CHMA: Same as GHMA (**Table 3**)
Livestock Grazing	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**), except note that RM-2 applies to LMHMA and SCHMA but does not apply to CHMA.
Wild Horse and Burro	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Mitigation	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Predation	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)

Approved RMP Amendment for Unique Habitat Management Areas: Little Missouri, South Carter, and Connectivity HMAs	
Resource Topic	**Allocation and Management Direction**
Disturbance Cap	See PHMA Direction (**Table 2**) Disturbance cap will apply to LMHMA in North Dakota but will not apply in LMHMA and SCHMA in Montana (calculations will be used for tracking objectives), however BLM will still require project proponents to submit projects to the Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Program that fall in core areas, and the BLM will consider state findings and recommendations in decisions. No CHMA Disturbance Cap Direction
Adaptive Management	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**). UHMAs are considered as GHMA in the approach.
Lek Definitions	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Criteria Based Management Direction for Non-Habitat	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Fire and Fuels	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Vegetation	Included in All HMA Direction (**Table 1**)
Utility Scale Solar	LMHMA and SCHMA: Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) CHMA: Same as GHMA (**Table 4**)
Utility Scale Wind	LMHMA and SCHMA: Same as PHMA (**Table 2**) CHMA: Same as GHMA (**Table 4**)

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – TABLES AND MAPS

APPENDIX 2 – COMPARISON OF PRIOR GREATER SAGE-GROUSE RMP MANAGEMENT DIRECTION WITH APPROVED RMP AMENDMENT

APPENDIX 3 – GREATER SAGE-GROUSE MONITORING FRAMEWORK

APPENDIX 4 – GREATER SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT INDICATORS AND BENCHMARKS

APPENDIX 5 – LIVESTOCK GRAZING BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND DESIGN FEATURES

APPENDIX 6 – MONTANA/DAKOTAS FLUID MINERAL STIPULATIONS FOR UNLEASED LANDS

APPENDIX 7 - GLOSSARY

APPENDIX 8 – REFERENCES

APPENDIX 9 – U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE SECTION 7 CONCURRENCE MEMO

APPENDIX 10 – ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

APPENDIX 11 – SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES BETWEEN PROPOSED RMPA AND ROD

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